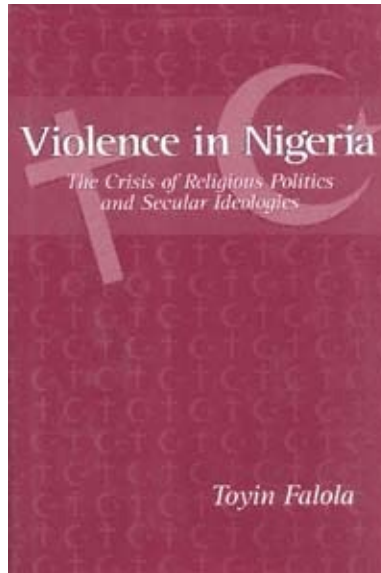




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Violence in Nigeria

The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies

Toyin Falola



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS

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For my daughter, Bisola Omolola Falola

For how long shall we continue this trial and error and groping for a workable system? Given the present trend what chances do we stand to survive as a nation? Can we even survive the present mess? Perhaps more important, has there been any nation in history which flourished under thoughts, ideas, institutions and political culture which are not only alien but hold in contempt the history, culture and conviction of a great majority of its people? . . . For Muslims nothing is acceptable besides Islam. (Muslim Students Society, Radiance: A Muslim Magazine for the Contemporary Mind, October 1983, 1.)

Nigeria is not a secular state. There are many religions in Nigeria. For federalism to work, you concede to people their peculiarity. (Abdukadir Orire, Grand Khadi of Kwara state, This Week, 24 Oct. 1988, 23.)

Religion is not the business of government. It is not a political matter that should be of interest to the government. Any reasonable government should and in fact must keep completely away from religion. They should stay clear. (Archbishop Anthony Olubunmi Okogie, The Guardian, 20 Nov. 1988.)

All-powerful and merciful Father, you are the God of justice, love, and peace. We present our country, Nigeria, before you. We are sorry for all the sins we have committed and for good deeds we have failed to do. In your loving forgiveness keep us safe from the punishments we deserve. Lord, we are weighed down not only by uncertainties but also by moral, economic, and political problems. Spare this nation, Nigeria, from chaos, anarchy, and doom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Weekly prayer for Nigeria, St. Dominic's Catholic Church, Lagos)

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Preface

My primary aim in this book is a comprehensive analysis of the religious violence and conflicts prevalent in Nigeria since the 1970s. Assuming a *priori* that religion affects politics and vice versa, I discuss in detail all the major cases of violence threatened and inflicted in the 1980s and 1990s. To help in understanding these cases and other dimensions of religious aggression and conflicts, I will examine closely the rivalries among various religious groups, the roles of leading individuals, and the consequences of religious trouble. I have sought to pull together divergent but mutually reinforcing approaches and paradigms drawn from history, sociology, religious studies, political science, literature, and economics, and also to draw on examples not only from modern Nigeria, but also from other times and places.

This study does not set out to explore all the broad issues of religion and politics in Nigeria; rather, it is more narrowly focused on the two inter-related themes of violence and conflict. Factors in the discussion include religion, the state, and Nigerian society in historical perspective, as they all affect the causes and continuity of violence and conflict. The book's two concluding chapters examine the problems of conflict resolution.

For two years I conducted extensive interviews throughout Nigeria, where my many field assistants and I collected information from hundreds of religious-riot victims, religious leaders, politicians, members of the military, and other shapers of Nigerian politics. Detailed ethnographic data were collected in areas of major crises (Kaduna, Kafanchan, Zaria, Kano, Katsina, Bauchi, Zangon-Kataf, and elsewhere), on Islamic organizations (*Izala*, Tijaniyya, Qadiriyya, Jama'atu Nasril Islamiyya, and others), and on Christian organizations

involved in the conflicts (most notably the Christian Association of Nigeria). Because the religious violence will doubtless continue, most informants have expressed a desire to remain anonymous; names are used herein only with informants' written consent.

I was, in addition, able to collect major religious messages and sermons on religious crises composed in different Nigerian languages, since in

recent years, the use of audiocassettes has become commonplace. I obtained many of these, along with published leaflets, pamphlets, and books by religious groups. I also relied on questionnaires administered to hundreds of people at different locations, thanks to the aid of my assistants.

I completed this study before the creation of six new Nigerian states and 183 local councils in October 1996. At press time the details of new and adjusted boundaries were still being drawn up and, in some cases, contested. Because no official government map of these new boundaries was available, and to avoid confusion, I have chosen to adopt the 1993-1996 political maps for purposes of this study.

It remains for me to pay customary tribute to all those who have helped me in some way. My original interest in religion developed in the 1970s, first as part of a desire to understand the history of Islam and Christianity, and later in relation to the survival of indigenous religion. This interest led to a number of essays and two books. The larger concern of understanding Yoruba history and Nigeria's political economy compelled me temporarily to abandon my interest, which was revived in the 1990s. This revival owed in part to my many discussions in the 1980s with colleagues at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Reviving an interest is one matter; to sustain it is, for me, more difficult. For sustaining the interest that has led to this book, I was privileged to be associated with Dr. Tunde Lawuyi, then a staff member in the Department of Sociology at Ile-Ife, and one of my most devoted colleagues and friends. Dr. Lawuyi is both erudite and prolific, with a cultural understanding far superior to mine. His early essays on Yoruba religion and society inspired me to return to the role of culture in the development process, although I have had to reject many of his aggressive interpretations. By frequently asking me to read his essays, Dr. Mathews Ojo, also of Ile-Ife, forced upon me a mentorship role that kept me on my toes

following the literature on the changing Christian faith in contemporary Africa. At the start of our long and productive relationship, Mathews was my student, but he has since become a teacher I deeply respect and cherish now an established scholar, he has an understanding of Christianity in Nigeria much more nuanced than mine.

If learning is a continuous process, I owe mine to only one person: the indefatigable and inspiring Rev. Dr. Matthew Hassan Kukah, my best Nigerian friend north of the Niger and Benue rivers. Hassan restored my confidence in empirical scholarship, and taught me to be sensitive to the

ordinary statements of religious people. Hassan moderates my bold and sometimes hasty views with rich, true stories and personal experiences. I can never pretend to have the same kind of passion that Hassan has for the development of Nigeria; may his kind multiply, as they say.

I regret that these three Nigerian scholars did not have the opportunity either to discuss or read this manuscript. They may be surprised to learn the extent of my indebtedness to them.

Major support for this research was provided by the Guggenheim Foundation, without whose support this and related books would not have been possible, and to which I cannot fully express my gratitude. Before the Guggenheim money arrived, my good friend Femi Owoseni (Baba Sunbo) of IBM in Austin graciously allowed me to charge my initial transportation expenses to his credit card. God, however, has not acceded to my request that Owoseni forget about his money.

I was able to write the first draft of this book at the Humanities Research Centre (HRC) of the Australian National University in Canberra. I thank the HRC for a generous fellowship and a conducive atmosphere for working and interacting with distinguished colleagues from all over the world. (If all HRC fellows abuse their privileges as much as I did, it will soon pass into oblivion.) At the HRC, I had the opportunity of discussing many aspects of the project with different people, such as Professor Bruce Berman of Queen's University, Kingston, Canada; Dr. Alinah Zegobye of the University of Botswana, who read chapter 9 with keen interest; Kate Shelton, an artist with an interest in Africa; and Dizzie Lizzie Dwyer, a most valuable friend and teacher of religion. In Canberra, I was lucky to receive kindness and words of encouragement from many people, most especially Alwell, the budding chemist.

My field research would have suffered without the dedication and commitment of six assistants, who combed the nooks and crannies of the country to interview hundreds of people in different locations. My two extended trips to Nigeria benefited from the hospitality and cooperation given me by a long list of people, of whom I can mention only a few here: Professor Adamu Mahadi, Director of the Center for Documentation, Arewa House, Kaduna; Uyilawa Usuanlele of the National Council for Arts and Culture; Yinka Banwo and Dr. H. O. Danmole of the History Department, University of Ilorin; A. Zaccheaus of Enugu; Mr. and Mrs. Banwo of Kaduna; and El-hajj Abdulahi of Sokoto, who graciously facilitated my contacts with the sultan and the leadership of two notable Islamic organi-

zations. Several people risked their lives to collect data in such troubled places as Kafanchan, Katsina, Zaria, and Zangon-Kataf. They have requested anonymity, which I respect, although it gives me great pain not to be able to show my gratitude as adequately as I would have liked.

Initial comments on the draft were provided by Joel Tishken and Morgan Davis of the University of Texas at Austin and by Dr. Segun Ilesanmi of Wake Forest University. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for me to match the brilliance of Professor Ilesanmi, now arguably the best scholar of his generation. Among a host of scholars who read my drafts are Joseph Abi, Peter Warm, and David Master. I was also privileged to benefit from intense discussion with Paul Lovejoy, Abdulahi Maradi, Mahmud Jibril, and Clement Umo. Professor John Peel of the School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London and Robert Molteno, a distinguished editor with Zed Press, gave valuable advice. Sean Culhane, director of the University of Rochester Press, chose two careful evaluators and suggested a more appealing title. Ian Quinn, also of Rochester, is a thorough and dedicated copyeditor who deserves my gratitude. Louise Goldberg, the production editor, is both thorough and friendly. I thank these people and others for their scrutiny, and take full responsibility for the final product.

Both Dr. Vik Bahl and Manuel Callahan allowed me unrestricted access to their rich library on violence and politics in India and the United States. Vik and Manuel are kind, dedicated, and compassionate friends with more innovative ideas in their heads than most people I have met. After the last revision, my brilliant and hardworking student Steven Salm took valuable time to read the entire manuscript, committing many days to ensure that the manuscript met technical guidelines. Kathleen O'Connor, a student of indigenous religions at Harvard, also spent time reading the manuscript and saving me from

errors. Bob Reppe and Cynthia Quinn prepared the maps within a short time and with dedication. Joel Tishken, always willing to help, ably prepared the index. Andrew Clarno, another loyal student, was a second reader of the proofs.

I offer well-deserved thanks to my family O'Bisi, Dolly, Biz, and Sisto for their love and support. O'Bisi is my only hero, my best friend, and my most dedicated companion, and where she gets her energy I do not know. Nor do I understand how the kids have gotten so tall since I started this book.

This is an exciting moment in my department, bringing new graduate students who promise to develop into outstanding scholars of Africa.

New professors have also arrived Robin Kilson, Kevin Gaines, and Penny Von Eschento enhance our collective reputation. Professor Carolyn Boyd, our department chair, offers crucial support, sometimes beyond the call of duty. My special request from Olorun (without the toyin) is that her good deeds in the summer of 1995 will be sufficient to secure admission to the heavenly paradise. Meanwhile, may she live long and prosper and become an Omoyeni to her parents. I cannot but mention again and again my most esteemed friends, John and Diana ("Elephant") Lamphear. This time has marked Diana's survival from lung cancer and an automobile accident. If a cat has nine lives, Diana has eighteen! May Allah and all His leading *anabi* bless the Lamphears in abundance. The friendship of the Lamphears and the genuine interest of two successive chairs of my department, Brian Levack and Carolyn Boyd, have prevented my accepting generous offers from other schools.

I must also thank a large crowd of Nigerian immigrants, especially those that I have ignored in previous books. In a community where friendship is difficult to nurture, and in which people interact because of what they can obtain from one another, I have been more than blessed to know such good people as the families of Jackson Olaniyi-Oke (*baba obinrin merin ati abo aja kan*), Akin Ogunrinade (*oko Fola, iya Stephanie, Ondo Egin*), Kayode Fayemi (*okunrin meta, oko Bisi adumaradan*), and Abiodun Isola (*apon before oko Moji baba Sina*) for bringing joy to me and my family. May God grant the ebullient Jackson his request for an *obinrin miran ti yio je iya aremo re*, gentle Akin for his wife to complete her nursing program, smart Abiodun for the fulfilment of his business dream, and revolutionary Kayode for a better Nigeria. *Amin ase, ko se ko se ni ti lakose!*

TOYIN FALOLA
 ILE TITUN, AUSTIN
 SUMMER 1997

Introduction

Background

Nigeria, one of the largest and most important countries in the third world, has been in the news in the last fifteen years as a major African theater of religious violence and aggression, as have Sudan and Algeria. A religious divide separates Christians and Muslims, and long-standing intra-religious conflicts further divide the people. The imperfect distribution of adherents to Islam and Christianity is complicated by ethnic differences: the north (with the exception of central Nigeria, known as the Middle Belt) is predominantly Muslim, and the southeast is predominantly Christian. It is only southwestern Nigeria where both religions are equally represented. In a polity that is already fragile and on the brink of collapse, religious trouble at this moment presents a great threat. The institutionalization of religious violence and the aggressive competition for dominance by Islam and Christianity continue to have a negative impact on the Nigerian nation.

Created by the British at the turn of this century, Nigeria is a multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural country. In the 1960s, it survived Africa's first and most costly modern war, the civil war of Biafra. Nigeria continues to be troubled today under the grip of a military dictatorship, poverty, and, at the moment, power struggles and religious divisions. What happens in Nigeria affects a quarter of the African population and will have a far-reaching impact on the global community. This study is about the violence and aggression that religion has generated in Nigeria since the late 1970s.

Religion and politics have been bedfellows throughout Nigerian history. In the precolonial era, religion was integral to the state; it was

part of identity construction, a means for power legitimation, and a determiner of

economic might (see chapter 1). During the colonial period, Islam and Christianity spread rapidly. Christianity was particularly privileged and produced a new elite that controls the postcolonial economy and bureaucracy (see chapter 2).

When the country won its independence in 1960, the most destabilizing factor was ethnicity. Scholarly attention focused on ethnicity and the use of crosscutting institutions in solving the problem of ethnic strife. Power was gradually strengthened at the center of a federal system so as to keep together the country's diverse ethnic components. The three major political and geographic regions—north, east and west—were further subdivided and consequently weakened. Since the late 1970s, however, religion has become as disruptive as ethnicity. There have been more than a dozen serious religious riots, each claiming many lives and wreaking mass destruction of property and places of worship. Each riot was ended only through the intervention of the police or the military. Smaller, mostly unreported incidents, have divided local communities across Nigeria.

Underlying the riots has been the issue of religious dominance. Proponents of Christianity or Islam seek to unseat the rival religion, to impose their own values, and to control the state. This has become a major problem, and the struggle for political power has come to entail the manipulation of the symbols and beliefs of Islam and Christianity. Indeed, religion has become so important in recent history that no analysis of modern Nigerian politics in the last quarter of the twentieth century can fail to consider it fully.

Religion is used by the power-hungry as a stepping-stone to power and political legitimacy. Since the mid-seventies, politicians have urged their followers to vote along religious lines—Muslims are told to vote for Muslims, and Christians for Christians. In 1978, the National

Party of Nigeria (NPN) told its followers in one of its strong Islamic northern constituencies that the two-fingered V-for-victory sign of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was a covert symbol of polytheism, an idea counter to fundamental Islamic doctrine. The NPN adopted one raised finger as their symbol, turning the universal (and universally secular) V sign into a religious issue. Later, on the eve of the 1979 presidential elections, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi advised Nigerian Muslims, in a speech broadcast nationally, not to vote for a non-Muslim candidate. The 1990 gubernatorial elections in Lagos and Kaduna were deeply affected by religious issues, and the primary process for the 1993 election of a civilian president was complicated by conflicts between Muslim and Christian candidates.

Many analysts date the beginning of Nigeria's religious crisis to April 1978, when the Constituent Assembly for a Presidential Constitution was

holding deliberations. After the demise of the First Republic in 1966, the military governed for thirteen years before turning power over temporarily to civilian politicians. This transfer of governmental control involved writing a new constitution, which provided many opportunities for the participants to settle old scores and to create hegemonies on behalf of various ethnic and religious groups. As I shall point out below (see chapter 3), two religious issues related to whether Nigeria would become a secular state or subscribe to al-Shari'a, the Islamic code of laws, disrupted the constitution making process.

Religion reared its head again in the 1978 elections that followed the adoption of the constitution. Politicians once again campaigned by manipulating religious symbols and values. Other religion-inspired controversies during the 1970s included the rejection of the recitation of the national anthem and pledge by the Jehovah's Witnesses, the realignment of political parties along politico-religious lines, the discrimination against foreign missionaries in some parts of the federation, and the call by Christian leaders for state-supported pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Muslims were already being sponsored in pilgrimages to Mecca). The debate over al-Shari'a generated public demonstrations on both sides. But the most notable crisis occurred in 1978 in Zaria, when a clash between Muslim and Christian students of the Ahmadu Bello University killed six students and was quelled only with assistance from the army. The period of Muslim-Christian dialogue that had begun in the early 1970s was over.

If the 1970s were a decade of verbal wrangling and public demonstrations, the 1980s and 1990s were known for riots and outright political violence. Countless tragedies exemplify this trend. In 1980, the Maitatsine crisis claimed thousands of lives (the government conservatively estimated the death toll at just over four thousand) and caused millions of naira in property damage. On the last day of

October 1982, eight large churches were burned in the prominent city of Kano, while intra-Islamic violence led to the loss of two lives and the injury of hundreds of people. A major riot in Kaduna that same year claimed at least four hundred lives. In 1984, violence sparked by Muslims in Yola and Jimeta killed approximately seven hundred people (including policemen) and left nearly six thousand people homeless. The neighboring town of Gombe was also besieged, resulting in the death of more than one hundred people. In the first week of February 1986, police attempting to avert a riot forcefully dispersed a large crowd of Muslims at the National Theater in Lagos. That May, Muslim students at Usmanu dan Fodio University in Sokoto attacked other students with swords, cutlasses, broken bottles, and stones. At Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state, Palm Sunday turned disastrous as Christians clashed with Muslims, leading to the

destruction of three churches. In the south, at the University of Ibadan, Muslims set fire to a sculpture of Jesus in front of the Chapel of the Resurrection.

In March 1987, Christians and Muslims in key northern towns and cities such as Kaduna, Katsina, Zaria, and Kafanchan clashed with devastating consequences. Christians in Kafanchan wantonly destroyed the property of local Muslims. Within three days, every one of the hundred churches in Zaria were burned and many Christians had been slaughtered. Scores of Christian-owned houses and cars were damaged or burned in all these cities.

In 1988, Christians and Muslims turned the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria into a battlefield on which a hundred people were injured and one person lost his life. Two years later, students in a number of northern schools clashed on religious matters. The Government Vocational Training Center in Makarfi and the Government Technical College in Kaduna sustained the worst casualties and damage. In 1991, the religious crisis in Bauchi state reached the breaking point, leading to numerous deaths and massive destruction. In the same year, Kano and Katsina witnessed a series of riots. In 1992, large-scale violence returned to Kaduna state, with severe clashes in Zangon-Kataf, Kaduna, and Zaria.

Two 1994 incidents in Kano and Sokoto revived the tension. In Kano, a man standing trial for using the Qur'an as toilet paper was beheaded by a mob of Muslims. In Sokoto, another person was mobbed for publicly criticizing the Qur'an. In May and June 1995, a new crisis erupted in Kano, sparking sporadic attacks on Christians and southerners. In May 1996, eight people lost their lives when the police clashed with a group of Muslim students. The following month; Muslim students at the Kaduna Polytechnic Institute clashed with the police over the hosting of a beauty contest, which they claimed

debased Islam. The school had to be closed down to prevent a prolonged escalation of the conflict.

Chances that the government could end religious violence with violence of its own became minimal when the federal military government itself evidenced a bias for Islam by secretly joining the Organization of the Islamic Conference in January 1986. The Christian reaction frightened the military government, and a government effort to defuse tension by means of the National Advisory Council on Religious Affairs was abortive. After 1986, religious violence occurred often and without notice, with most outbreaks ending in large-scale destruction and the activation of the army and police to quell riots and protests. Fundamentalist Muslims seek a theocratic Nigeria governed not by secular, Western-style laws, but by the Qur'anic legal code. Christian fundamentalists, on the other hand, desire deeper spiritualism among Nigerians and an end to what they perceive as

the officially sanctioned dominance of Islam. Every minor opportunity to disagree inspires violence and bitter language.

In 1990, a group of civilian-supported southern Christian military officers decided to forcibly take over the government, claiming it was controlled by northern Muslims convinced of their "birthright to dominate till eternity the political and economic privileges of this great country."

1 In a radio address, the plotters of the coup announced the excision of five Islamic states Kano, Borno, Katsina, Bauchi, and Sokoto from the federation. They were unsuccessful, but it was widely speculated that had they achieved their goal, another civil war would have been unavoidable.

It is misleading, however, to think that Nigeria was free of religious troubles before 1980. For centuries, ever since the introduction of Islam and Christianity to the region that became modern Nigeria, there has been tension over interpretations of doctrine, the relationship between religion and state, and the use of religious issues for political gain. In the nineteenth century, Usmanu dan Fodio, using the idea of jihad, created the huge Sokoto caliphate, the largest state in West Africa until it was conquered by the British in 1903. In colonial Nigeria the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya brotherhoods engaged in major clashes that continued until the 1960s.² In the 1950s and 1960s, attempts by the northern regional power to spread Islam to central Nigeria generated protest and bitterness.³ By 1980, more than thirty-three cases of religious violence had been reported in the north alone.⁴

These earlier cases differed from the post-1980 crises in a number of ways. Since 1980, incidents of religious violence have increased in number, intensified, spread geographically, and affected larger and

larger portions of the nation. The scale of violence and brutality is greater, with many outbreaks ending in hundreds of deaths and massive destruction. The political manipulation of religious issues (as well as the historically problematic ethnic issues), especially at the federal level, is greater than ever before. Religion has encouraged political polarization and the constant fear of religious warfare potentially fatal to the country. Even if such a war has not taken place, Nigeria's unity and secularity have been threatened. Bitter conflicts and rivalries between Muslims and Christians in the post-1980 era are open, common, and a permanent feature of the country's politics.

The State of Research

The academic study of religion in Nigeria began in the 1950s as nationalist scholars undertook an agenda of reconstructing the positive side of Africa's

past. Rather than to examine objectively the political role of religion, these scholars felt it was more necessary and rewarding to correct the pervasive hostile characterization of indigenous religions as primitive, "pagan", and fetishist. Such scholarly pioneers as Bolaji Idowu concerned themselves with explaining and defending indigenous religions as both rich in content and relevant to the people.

5

During the 1960s and 1970s, scholars focused considerable attention on the history of Christianity's spread and the emergence of a Westernized elite. The scholars, J. F. Ade Ajayi, E. A. Ayandele, F. K. Ekechi, and J. D. Y. Peel, examined both the positive aspects of the Christian church and the several societal disruptions that accompanied its activities.⁶ Islam was treated similarly, with scholars emphasizing its great contributions to state-building in northern Nigeria, the nineteenth-century jihad, and the phenomenal spread of Islam during the colonial period. Notable studies of Nigerian Islam from this time include works by John Paden, Murray Last, Abdullahi Smith, R. A. Adeleye, and T. G. O. Gbadamosi.⁷

As important as these studies are, they offer only restricted insight into the violence in contemporary Nigeria. In the first place, they barely explore the link between the spread of religion, the evolution of modern political structures and documents, and the character of the state itself. There can be no doubt that there is a religious foundation to modern Nigeria. In fact, all civilizations, Mircea Eliade argues, are governed by some "metaphysical-moral vision."⁸ What this vision is in the case of Nigeria has yet to be fully elaborated upon. What is clear, at least with respect to northern Nigeria, is that the vision comes from Islam. The content, limitations, and possibilities of other religions need to be analyzed more carefully and in greater historical

depth. Political and religious leaders argue from time to time that modern Nigeria needs viable ethics, but it has yet to be determined whence these ethics should come, and the early studies of religion in Nigeria are silent with respect to how the past can produce such ethics. Other questions await answers from scholars. Muslims and Christians are hostile to traditional religions, but what elements of indigenous culture do they find acceptable? If these elements are not religious, how effective can they be? If they are religious and are tolerable to Muslims and Christians, then how do they differ from Islamic and Christian theologies? Or would it be possible for the two major religions to develop local particularisms that would be broadly acceptable? Should the nation borrow from its ancient culture in searching for a cultural hegemony, to use Gramsci's term? Or, as David Laitin suggests,⁹ is it possible to focus on "the reification of ancestral city," as did the Yoruba in uniting under Ile-Ife and the Oduduwa myth?

Would such particularistic recourse to cultural themes not intensify the differences among different ethnic groups, imperiling national integration? If regional political boundaries coincide with lines between majority-religion areas, as is the case in Nigeria, do cultural particularisms coterminous with these borders not cause dysfunction?

Most early studies are neither comparative nor interdisciplinary in their approaches to religion. Each of these studies treats one religion as it has spread in one area. Interactions among different religions and among different regions are not discussed, and certainly the larger context of pan-Nigerian society and politics does not figure in these early analyses.

Unfortunately, the legacy of some of these early studies has been the misguided conclusion that religious violence is a new phenomenon in Nigeria, one that began only in the 1980s. This seems to have happened because the early scholarship focused on tolerance and accommodation rather than conflict. I have argued before that we must trace the origins of the present crisis much further back than 1978.

10 In seeking the reasons for today's sharp and volatile religious boundaries in Nigeria, it is crucial to reevaluate the influence of the Christian elite since 1842 and the role of the colonial state in the first half of this century. Religious tension had started to build as early as 1930 as the Muslim elite became increasingly upset by the power and arrogance of the Christian elite. Although weaker because of its comparatively slow acquisition of Western education, the Islamic elite gradually became more assertive and combative, and much greater consciousness of religious factors evidenced itself after 1978.¹¹

Islam has largely been treated as a conservative religion supporting

conservative values.¹² Although Paul Lubeck studied how it radicalized the working class, he nevertheless concluded that this is a less important factor than is class.¹³ David Laitin, drawing on the work of Max Weber and Antonio Gramsci, looks at the intricacies of pluralism among the Yoruba, where three religious traditions flourish.¹⁴ Many of these post-1978 studies now require extensive reevaluations in light of the subsequent recurrence of religious violence, the escalating religious tension that went unnoticed in these studies, and their failure to anticipate the major impact of religion on politics.

Scholars of the 1970s tended generally to underestimate the problem of religious conflict and were silent on the issues of violence and hegemony. The better studies are those that treat Islam, which is widely regarded as the more political of the two majority religions. The radicalization of Christianity went uncaptured to the extent that the emergence of militant bodies such as the Christian Association of Nigeria and fundamentalist charismatic movements went completely unnoticed in the literature.¹⁵ In fact,

many social scientists were unconvinced until recently that religion ought to be treated to the same extent as ethnicity in studies of Nigeria.

16 Even when the first major religious conflict arose in the late 1970s, the leading opinion held that it was merely an evanescent nuisance. Marxist scholars were even slower in their arrival at an appreciation of the problem, which explains why they either ignore the subject or subsume its treatment under class analysis. The only credible explanation they have managed to muster is that political actors in Nigeria manipulate religion to advance their goals.¹⁷ While this may be true, it fails to deal with the mass appeal of religion, the rise of fundamentalism, and the fact that political actors seem to profit from religious violence. In a Weberian formulation, an isolated understanding of the manipulation of religion is less than satisfactory in understanding the needs and expression of a religious community.¹⁸

Social scientists failed to recognize the problem of religion until recently because of their narrow focus on class and ethnicity. Serious thought on instability and violence in Nigeria has largely sought engineering mechanisms for minimizing the dangers of ethnicity and class, and not religion. According to Iheanyi Enwerem, no serious Nigerian social scientist devoted any attention to religion between 1960 and 1980, and the influential *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies* did not publish a single article on religion in those two decades.¹⁹ Enwerem argues that this failure owes to the underdevelopment of the social sciences in Africa, the academic neglect of institutions that are assumed to be supportive of colonialism, and a proclivity to attribute most African problems to colonialism. In a short but broad synthesis, Jeff Haynes argues

convincingly that the neglect of religion is common in modernization and dependency analyses of third-world politics, both of which models treat religion as a mere epiphenomenon. Religion is regarded as part of the traditional past that will decline in importance as the society advances toward Westernization.²⁰

The eye-opening outbreak in 1980 of the Maitatsine riots in Kano gave birth to a new body of scholarly literature that includes this book.²¹ The post-Maitatsine riots and Nigeria's development of clandestine relations with the Organization of the Islamic Conference brought the religious crisis to its climax. Yet there still exists no full-length study that describes and explains the sudden profound role of violence into Nigerian politics and life since the 1980s. No widely held theories for curtailing the devastation of violence and aggression have been formulated. What is more, the scholars active in the field oftentimes are themselves either participants or powerful actors in the conflicts. H. M. Kukah and B. P. Tanko, for example, are both influential leaders in the Catholic community. While

their works are stimulating, they do not appeal to those Muslims who believe that the scholarly objectivity of these authors is compromised by their religious identity. The structure and orientation of most of such works confirm the Muslims' suspicions; the authors begin by addressing the national hegemony of Islam and northern Nigeria, appealing Christians to unite in an ecumenical fight against their common Islamic enemy. Muslim scholars, in turn, come back with insightful and combative counterarguments that many Christians find irritating and provocative.

22

Recent works by Chukwuma, Kukah, Tanko, Y. Turaki,²³ and Enwerem are relevant to the present study because they seek to explore the contributions of religion to postindependence politics, although their attention to the place of violence is minimal. Either by chance or by design, all of these authors are eminent and articulate Christian priests: Tanko was once detained by the military government for radical behavior; Kukah is the Secretary of the Catholic Secretariat in Lagos and a celebrated newspaper commentator; Turaki is the principal of a major theological school, a devout Christian from central Nigeria, and an activist in the Christian Association of Nigeria; and Iheanyi Enwerem, working from the renowned Dominican Institute in Ibadan, is building a potentially important international role for himself. Their studies represent a Christian perspective, no more and no less, and they use their scholarship to further an agenda that is just and legitimate in a restricted context. The opinions of these influential scholars are widely circulated, and so as influential actors in Nigerian politics and religion, they themselves have become part of the problem. I have consequently tended to regard their studies as part of the historiography of the crisis.

Nowhere is the bias of these scholars better reflected than in the framing of Nigeria as a liberal secular state. Though a secular model of statehood may be the ideal in a modern multiethnic and multireligious society, many questions have been left unanswered in presenting such a model, in its present form, as a permanent option for Nigeria. Numerous tensions plague a so-called secular Nigeria, some relating to the challenges posed to this very concept by Islam and some related to the management of Nigeria as a country. Why does modern Nigeria aspire to govern itself by secular documents and institutions while many of its citizens organize their lives by moral and religious codes? Within this contradictory framework, can power be neutral, or, alternatively, can religiously-biased political actors operate a secular system? Are we exaggerating the governmental role of the modern secular state in the face of competing alternatives? Lamin Sanneh has offered a compelling argument that the sovereign state is not the absolute and self-sufficient instrument that many people think it to be, and that

religious ideas can be used to strengthen even a secular state.

24 Loyalty to the state and loyalty to religion are very different in Nigeria, an ambiguity that all the aforementioned scholars fail to resolve. As one of them told me, "I respect my bishop more than the governor of this state. Should the two of them send for me, I will obey the bishop first." This is not an unusual kind of sentiment: people tend to respect religious leaders more than secular ones.

Religion, Politics, and Violence

Violence has for years engaged scholarly attention from a variety of disciplines, approaches, and theoretical frameworks. The literature is so extensive and broad-ranging that no attempt can be made here to review it comprehensively. Rather, I will identify those issues that are relevant to the Nigerian situation, specifically to the linkage of violence in Nigeria to religion. Central to this connection is the religion's political role.

Scholars have increasingly turned their gaze on the role of religion in politics since 1978, when events in Iran, Afghanistan, and Nicaragua, in demonstrating that religion could be used as a tool for capturing power, disproved theories that underplayed the role of religion in politics and society.²⁵ In these and other places Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Algeria, Nigeria, and Nicaragua, to name a few religious leaders either gained political power or clashed influentially with secular authorities as political boundaries were defined and redefined. In general, they have been very successful.

This success has promoted a flood of new scholarship, some of which assumes incorrectly that the relationship between religion and politics is new. The inadequacy of this assumption can be demonstrated by an attempt to understand politics in Saudi Arabia since the late 1920s

without considering the role of the 'ulama (Islamic cleric/teachers), or to explain the Islamic caliphate established in nineteenth-century Nigeria. It is also improper to assume that religion and politics can easily be divorced in a theoretical framework; such a separation would be exaggerated or even artificial, since in real-world situations religion and politics are inextricably bound up in one another to some degree.

With respect to the so-called traditional societies, on the other hand, there seems to be a consensus that politics and religion have never been separate. And with respect to the modern age, many scholars have examined the secularization process by which religion gradually became separated from politics. This separation has never been total, and its extent

varies from place to place.

26 Most of the recent works are essentially attempts to measure the degree of secularity in one place or another and to explain both its continuity and its forms. Writing in 1978, David Laitin identified certain aspects of religion as those that most affect politics: doctrine, practical interpretations of doctrine, and the interaction of religion with culture in various settings.²⁷ Religion affects social and political order by defining appropriate conduct and morality. The state is not value-free, and many of its prevailing values are drawn from religion.²⁸ Many scholars have focused on the fact that religion has been used as a means of critiquing the modern secular state on the one hand, and providing alternatives to its failed leadership and political authoritarianism on the other.²⁹ The bulk of the literature is dominated by discussions of the religious challenge to secular ideologies;³⁰ that is, the opposition to secular politics constituted by religion as a force and an ideology. In one recent example, Jeff Haynes argues that "in the context of failed modernization and inadequate government people are highly susceptible to radical alternatives which hold out the promise of transforming this world."³¹ To him, religion is such a radical alternative, one that impacts the related issues of political authority, legitimacy, power, and equity. Religion is used to pressure for change because of popular discontent, and its symbols and values are manipulated by political leaders to consolidate power. Several studies have examined how religion contributes to national integration, political mobilization, the formation of ethnic identity, and nationalism.³² Other studies examine religion's effect on foreign policy.³³ As to the place of religion in future politics and international diplomacy, the consensus now is that it is and will continue to remain important.³⁴

An aspect of religion that has dominated the literature is that of fundamentalism.³⁵ Fundamentalism is an extremely problematic term and difficult to define with precision,³⁶ more so now that it is often used negatively in the West to condemn and criticize Islamic groups unilaterally, including those groups with legitimate struggles, and to describe the religious views of all organizations described as terrorist. The term "fundamentalism" can refer to three interrelated tendencies in religion: (a) a commitment to seek answers in religion to the crises that afflict the world and its peoples; (b) religious revivalism in a variety of forms such as aggressive proselytization, intense spiritualism, and rigorous worship; and (c) increasing militancy, that is, aggressively using religion as a vehicle or a movement to reorder society, combat ills, reform religion, fight opposition, and accomplish other goals. All three of these tendencies combine religion with politics to create an intensity of action on the part of believers.

Various

forms of fundamentalism can be found both in Christianity and Islam, although it may connote different meanings in each religion.

Fundamentalism is generally considered to be on the rise in both Islam and Christianity.

37 While this trend can be documented, explanations for it are controversial. Its rise has been attributed variously to individual insecurity in a changing world, to economic crises, to the global spread of religious doctrines, to the failure of the state, and to adjustments necessitated by the spread of capitalism. The connection is not always very clear-cut; for instance, economic stagnation is generally blamed for fundamentalism, but the experiences of India, Thatcher-era Great Britain, and the United States under Ronald Reagan show that periods of economic growth can also witness the rise of fundamentalism.³⁸

The presence of fundamentalism heightens the political relevance of religion. There are, however, conservative religious movements that actually create a distance with politics and refuse to attack the state. Paul Gifford, for instance, has demonstrated that conservative Protestantism, by refusing to criticize the state, abetted the consolidation of Samuel Doe's power and ultimately the collapse of Liberia.³⁹ In general, fundamentalism is associated more with radicalism than conservatism, especially among the Muslims.

Clearly there are several ways to frame the relationship between religion and violence. Some analysts contend it is simply an issue of fundamentalism and nothing more. To other scholars, the answer lies in the power of religion to shape people's lives and to embolden their demands. Yet to a number of others, violence is simply a response to debilitating economic and political conditions.

From the empirical study I have undertaken, however, it is clear that a monocausal explanation is grossly inadequate. No single factor can explain religious violence in Nigeria; let us remain with the example of fundamentalism. Certainly not all cases of violence can be attributed to fundamentalism, and not nearly all of the participants in instances of Nigerian violence can be described as fundamentalists or even as religious people. Neither can we come to a satisfactory explanation by examining only religious doctrines and practices, as these tend to exclude social and political forces. Economic analysis is important, but it does not account for communal and doctrinal differences.

The Nigerian situation can only be understood by adopting an eclectic framework that combines relevant elements from history, religion, politics, and economics:

Political Instability.

We are dealing with an unstable country that is politically fragmented and ethnically divided. It fought a civil war in the

1960s and has yet to find a solution to military rule. Religious violence occurs within this context of political fragmentation and instability. The unstable state enhances the political value and credibility of religious leaders, encourages attention to credible alternative ways of organizing groups, and fails to prevent or effectively curb violence when it occurs. Successive military governments have failed to either institutionalize military rule or provide a stable democracy. The consequences are many: for one, those in power, occupied as they are by problems of legitimacy, are unable to accustom their supporting institutions to handling problems nonviolently. Therefore the state becomes violent in combating the violence of religion and of civil society, creating a vicious circle.

Diversity.

Ethnicity and intergroup relations are complicated in Nigeria. As the cases of violence in Zangon-Kataf and Bauchi (see chapter 7) demonstrate, religious and communal interests can merge to produce a crisis. In many cases, trying to differentiate between a religious identity and an ethnic one can either be difficult, impossible, or misleading. Hausa Muslims, for example, cannot describe their ethnic identity without mentioning Islam. The merger between ethnicity and religion does play out in some cases of violence, as when southerners become involved in religious crises in the north. Such a situation cannot be attributed simply to religious differences. Where ethnicity combines with religion, identity becomes stronger and conflicts tend to linger.

Poverty.

Nigeria is a poor country. Economic decline and a lack of opportunity continue to generate widespread frustration among most segments of the country's population. This frustration is expressed in religious, political, and communal violence. Social and economic dynamics

have seen violence become an especially common occurrence among students and the urban poor.

Modernization.

In trying to solve the problems that we have identified so far, the Nigerian state presents itself to its people as one that is seeking to modernize. Not only has it been unable to develop at a rate that will satisfy an expanding and restless population, but there is no consensus on the form of the modernization process itself or of the underlying value system. To those who interpret modernization in secular terms, the Nigerian state is heading in the wrong direction. The problem is not just coping with the problems of modernization, as some scholars claim,

40 but defining the role that religion ought to play in a modern society. While the state becomes increasingly involved in formerly religious spheres providing health and educational amenities, organization of pilgrimages, issuance of permits to preach, inter alia religion itself encroaches upon the state by

challenging many of its legislative powers and policies and questioning the legitimacy of those in power.

Foreign Affairs.

Nigeria is not isolated from world politics, the Islamic world, or other external influences. News and ideas travel not just via the mass media, but carried by an endless stream of traffic across the borders, and through letters, videos, books, pamphlets, audio cassettes, and today, the Internet. Nigerian Christians receive ideas, inspiration, and support from churches in the United States and Europe. They are limited in two ways, however, from being comparable to Muslims. First, there is no united Christian world that the Nigerian Christians might aspire to join. Second, there is no Christian state to use as a model on which to base an al-Shari'a-style political system not even the Vatican, which represents only one Christian denomination, albeit a large one. Nigerian Christians therefore tend to borrow secular ideas or seek ways to transform the practice of Christianity.

Muslims in Nigeria can point to political models in Libya, Iran, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and many other countries. Christians know about events in Europe and elsewhere. Models of the uses to which religion has been put are fairly well known and accurately discussed among Nigerians. Many Muslim preachers, for instance, know much about Libya's Khaddafi, Iran's Khomeini, and Indian and Pakistani politics, and they talk about all these things in relation to bringing about changes at home. Moreover, Muslim countries have sought the means to unite and cooperate with one another. Both the traditional and modern Muslim intelligentsia are offering their skills and services to ensure effective international cooperation.

Militancy.

As part of the flow of information and as an alternative answer to Nigeria's problems, there is an increasing growth of political militancy in religious activities. This militancy is usually labeled as fundamentalism in the literature, although this is a concept that fails to capture the ramified nature of this militancy's expression.⁴² The situation is not unique to Nigeria; religious militancy and radicalism have characterized contemporary politics recently in Iran, Ireland, India, Lebanon, Algeria, Sudan, and many other places. Politicized versions of Islam and Christianity are expressions of the increasingly militant character of religion in Nigeria and elsewhere. While they may not be similar, they do have several features in common: they adopt the rhetoric and language of liberation from an oppressive state, they envision a new kind of society, and they seek to base values in interpersonal relationships on religious principles. Religion thus fulfills a role of political opposition where the performance of secular authorities has been shoddy and disappointing.

As I shall show in chapter 6 below and have shown in another study,

⁴³ Nigerian Christianity is itself becoming increasingly militant. By the time Christianity reached Nigeria in the second half of the nineteenth century, it had already built a tradition of keeping religion and politics separate. Secular authorities ran the state, while priests and missionaries controlled the church. It was not that secular authorities were uninfluenced by Christianity; many were themselves Christians and endorsed religiously grounded policies like religious education, school prayer, and the observation of Sunday as a holiday. More importantly, a study by E. A. Ayandele and one of my own have shown that secular authorities have manipulated Christianity in order to establish authority, control, and even legitimacy.⁴⁴

The politicization of Christianity in Nigeria is in large part a response to the challenge posed by Islam. Before the 1970s, it was widely held that Christianity ought to distance itself from partisan politics.⁴⁵ This attitude has changed since the late 1970s into a belief that religion and politics can mix,⁴⁶ as it becomes more widely perceived that Muslims will stop at nothing to establish an Islamic Nigeria. However, two other factors have contributed to the growth of political Christianity.

In the first place, Christians also feel deep frustration with the economy and politics of their country. Hardly a Christian preacher refrains from criticizing the government. A few have espoused radical ideas, drawing mainly from Latin American liberation theology,⁴⁷ and preached about mass participation in politics and the need for equity, justice, and accelerated economic development. Radical liberation theologians are still few in Nigeria, and they tend to be located on university campuses and among a new generation of Catholic priests.⁴⁸

The second factor is the impact of revivalism, with a number of born-again Christians becoming more and more active in political parties and elections. One born-again Christian won a hotly contested 1987 local election in Kaduna, and another became the governor of Ondo state in the 1990s. These politically conscious Christians oppose the growing influence of Islam, and, while not demanding a religious state, they envision "a moral state governed by Godly people."⁴⁹ With this kind of political attitude prevalent, Christianity has also become a religion that astute politicians can manipulate to acquire power.

Globally speaking, militancy is identified more with Islam than with Christianity or any other religion, especially given current developments and the re-Islamization movements in Afghanistan, Algeria, Somalia, Jordan, Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, and Iran. Islam has been associated with politics

from its very beginning, thanks to its traditional refusal to separate religion and politics. In recent times, the politicization of Islam has become a means to forge an identity, one that is able to cope with city life, address the issue of secularism, and deal with the Western economic, technological, and foreign policy-related matters on a rational, nonreligious ground. As we shall see in chapters 5 and 7, there are Islamic leaders who use their religion as a political ideology to demand change, attack the state, and even call for the establishment of an Islamic state. Nigerian Muslims, especially the 'ulama and their followers, draw only on Islam for suggested solutions to the country's problems. They are Muslims first and Nigerians second. To the poor, who constitute the majority of the Islamic population in the country, Islam is the most effective vehicle by which to express dissent and to articulate ideological and political cleavages. As we shall see in chapter 3, many of these poor Muslims remain particularly uncomfortable with a secular country. Meanwhile, Muslims criticize the state within the secular framework, but envision transcending it. There is no consensus as to what a nonsecular Nigeria would look like; neither is there even a coherent blueprint for it, but the public discourse on antiseccularism is rather intense. More importantly, there is no single Islamic political group, or even a politically united umma. Rather, there are various groups and factions who fight among themselves, adding to the overall religious militancy and aggression. Young Muslims, even those with university educations, create pressure groups by mobilizing various Islamic organizations. There are as yet no Islamic political parties, but there are powerful groups working for the realization of what they define as Islamic interests. As I shall demonstrate in chapter 8, tensions among Muslims reflect various political views and class interests. Political and economic uncertainties continue to radicalize Muslims and encourage many to take up violence.

A final point concerns the religious revivalism that has become so common in Nigeria. One trend in contemporary Nigerian religion is an increasing commitment to issues of faith and aggressive proselytization. Religious differences and doctrines are presented in sharp contrast. Various revivalist groups are intolerant of one another, disagree over interpretations of doctrine, and view proselytization as warfare. In the media, the trend is labeled fanaticism. So-called fanatics are blamed both by the media and by the government for causing religious violence, a narrow perspective that limits possible solutions to the crisis. Revivalism is not restricted to Islam, as some authors seem to believe;

50 evangelical and Pentacostalist Christians continue to exhibit tendencies of revivalism.

Muslims and Christians alike, many Nigerians are deeply religious. Many are dogmatic, interpreting scripture in individualistic, narrow ways. One sect dismisses other groups of the same religion as heretical and condemns their practitioners. Many sects tend to be millenarian, advertising the impending arrival of a savior or a new kingdom. Preachers are outspoken and provocative.

The Nigerian media has constructed a circumscribed image of the fundamentalist, of which the following description is representative:

To them the belief in a religion other than theirs runs foul of the injunctions handed down by God through a messenger or prophet as the case may be. The fanatics see other "believers" as those who have gone astray and who need some sermon or preaching to make them fall in line with their doctrine, which to them is always the best and most reliable basis for redemption on the judgement day. . . . They believe rather wrongly that those who do not share their mode of worship or the doctrine of their religion were better dead than alive.

51

The role of violence cannot be underscored enough in characterizing Nigerian fundamentalism. It is not difficult to find believers, especially among a number of Islamic sects, in dying for one's religion and for just cause. Arguing self-defense, northern Nigerian Christians have begun to justify the use of violence to protect their lives and defend their faith. Militancy is expressed not only in physical violence but also in strong words.

In relating fundamentalism to militancy, a number of points stand out. First, fundamentalist Islam has gained a wider reputation for militancy than Christianity, as cases are reported across the world, creating a widespread impression that Islam is more violence-prone than Christianity. Second, there is a desire for reform among

fundamentalists; that is, the concept of the *tajdid* in Islama commitment to change with respect to both the religion and the state itself. Oftentimes freedom and nationalism are invoked in describing the search for change. "The rebirth of Nigeria is our main goal,"⁵² declared a member of the *Izala*, an anti-Sufi movement in northern Nigeria. Third, there is an international dimension: ideas and resources circulate among religious groups who tend to share similar commitments or vision. Some Islamic groups have been accused of receiving money from Iran and Libya. Finally, the religious leadership profit by being able to use religion to build a power base. It is not uncommon for religious leaders to incite their followers against the state, against other religions, or even against another sect of the same religion.

Regional and Global Dimensions

I have mentioned in passing some other countries to indicate the crucial interplay of religion and politics. Nigeria is not the only divided nation: countries like Israel, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Northern Ireland, and Guatemala, to name just a few, are characterized by political divisions accentuated by the fact of autonomous or semiautonomous constituencies built around cultural institutions including religion.

53 I do not intend to universalize the definitions or causes of this variety of experiences and distinct national settings, but invoke these examples to show (a) that Nigeria's experience with respect to the role of religion in politics is not unique; (b) that where two or more religions are dominant and assertive, they may clash and generate political problems; and (c) that the solutions to religious conflicts tend to be difficult and complicated.

Nigeria's problems have not been replicated in scale or degree elsewhere in western Africa, although the surrounding countries are not immune from religious controversies. In Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Chad, and Niger, where Muslims are clearly in the majority, tension exists among the different Islamic groups trying to achieve hegemony. In these places, political leaders have used Islam to articulate both religious and secular ideas. Islamic leaders are often used as political advisers, as they are in Senegal and Gambia. In Guinea, Muslim leaders have pushed to curtail further the influence of Christians, a mere one percent of the population, by nationalizing missionary schools and by minimizing the number of foreign missionaries. In Sierra Leone, Muslims claim to be in the majority, but trouble has mostly been focused around ethnicity, and Christians (about twelve percent of the population) have historically held the

reins of national power. In Benin, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Togo, Muslims admit that they are in the minority, and a Christian elite has come to dominate these countries.

In other parts of Africa, there are places where religion is used simply as an agent of change or to alter the configurations of power. Such is the case in Algeria, where Islamic groups struggle against secular authorities, and in South Africa, where religion helped to strengthen opposition to apartheid.⁵⁴ In eastern and central Africa, both Islam and Christianity are connected with the politics of identity and the definition of nationhood. Various forms of religious association discuss faith and society in ways that connect with secular issues, intergroup relations, and poverty. There are also many religious leaders who use religion as a point of access to the political arena and to protect a variety of interests. Tanzania offers a con-

trast to Nigeria in this respect. Muslims there constitute nearly one-third of the population, a significant proportion that can encourage a high level of political radicalism. There has, however, been more cooperation than conflict since the days of the independence struggle, when adherents to both religions were united under the umbrella of the Tanganyika African United Union. Since 1987, there has been a rising tide of Islamic militancy, but this has not significantly threatened the stability of the state. The reasons for cooperation include the absence of a dominant ethnic group able to exert control over others, the political craftsmanship of Julius Nyerere and his successor, the commonality of the Swahili language, and attempts to create the socialist ideology of *ujamaa* to subordinate differences to economic transformations. *Ujamaa* did not accomplish its long-term goals, but it brought together people of different religions.

55 In 1985, Nyerere, a Catholic, handed power to Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim.

In many places in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Islam has been effectively deployed, either by the state or by a political class, to frame ideologies of control and domination. Islam has contributed to the emergence of social cleavages for or against the state. In places like Pakistan and Indonesia, civil societies take the form of Islamic religious groups in order to seek reforms, oppose changes, and challenge authorities. In Iran and Egypt, Islamic fundamentalism has created ideological themes and networks to build successful political movements. In Nigeria, Islam is playing political roles as crucial as those in these other countries, provoking reactions from the state and from Christian religious communities.

There are also more complicated cases, resembling more closely what occurs in Nigeria, where two or more powerful religions or religious

communities struggle for control to protect their interests. In Africa, Sudan is the best example, where a civil war began in 1955 and continues today.⁵⁶ Islam has long been entrenched in Sudan, but more in the north than in the south. The northern part was Arabicized and Islamicized between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. After 1780, Sufi brotherhoods gained ground, further consolidating the Islamic hold. Between 1882 and 1885, a Mahdist state was established, with an Islamic theocracy dominating northern Sudan.⁵⁷ During the first half of the twentieth century, British rule affirmed the dominance of Islam and integrated it into the bureaucratic and secular institutions, while Christianity continued to remain important among many ethnic groups in the south. Islam was involved in the politics of decolonization in Sudan, especially in the formation of political parties that profited from religion. Indeed, some political unions were also Islamic organizations. With independence in 1956 came the call for the adoption

of al-Shari'a and a change to an Islamic constitution. After 1962, the Islamist movement became "a political ideological movement."

58

The tension between north and south escalated in the 1950s, resulting in civil war. The 1960s were marked by a demand for an Islamic constitution among many northern Muslims. Southern Christians felt that northerners sought to enslave them as a people. When Nimeiri took over in 1969, events moved toward the use of force to spread Islamic ideas. Nimeiri not only enforced al-Shari'a, he aimed at establishing a theocratic state. In July 1989, a coup brought Umar al-Bashir into power; in 1991, he promulgated Islamic law and pursued other measures to ensure political control. Other political changes have failed, but the most sustained controversy revolves around al-Shari'a. Every measure has been resisted by the southerners, who regard the imposition of al-Shari'a as an attempt to destroy them. Oppositional nationalism has been intense in the south, organized since the 1980s by Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement and their paramilitary wing, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army. Thus far, there is no end in sight to the Sudanese crisis, which continues to revolve around the role of Islam in the formation of political parties, identity, and law.

Asia appears to be the real battleground for communal and religious differences.⁵⁹ China, which would like to see itself as homogeneous, is having trouble with Muslim nationalism in the western frontier region of Xinjiang, and the government has been using force to either silence or suppress this group of people. In Sri Lanka, the Muslims, who are in the minority, have been victims of the conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil, the two major rivals for control of the country. Both competing groups demand Muslim loyalty. Cases of ethnic

cleansing have been reported in the north, where Tamil separatist forces have been accused of killing Muslims. Muslims have demanded a separate province for protection. There has also been a vigorous call among the Sinhalese Buddhists for a Buddhist state, to the consternation of the Hindu Tamil.

In South Asia, violence has broken out significantly in several countries, especially in the 1980s, where Colombo was devastated in 1983, Delhi in 1984, Gujarat in 1985, and Karachi in 1986. In India, the conflict between Hindus and Muslims has a very long history.⁶⁰ The 1971 breakup of Pakistan and the concomitant creation of Bangladesh marked the culmination of a prolonged tension. Recent conflicts have had devastating consequences. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India, religious and ethnic groups have formed identity-based resistance movements against their governments. In India, Muslims and Hindus continue to fight, and Sikh and Kashmiri separatist movements only compound the problem. The Sikh

continue to demand an independent Punjab state. The 1984 attack on their most cherished temple, the Golden Temple, in addition to the massacre of many Sikhs, escalated intercommunal and interreligious tension. Kashmir Muslims, hostile to the Indian state and opposed to Hindu nationalism, seek a separate state, and one faction wishes in fact to merge with Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, Muslim minority elements have been drawn into the Sinhalese-Tamil civil war. The southern provinces of Pakistan have witnessed ethnic conflicts between the Mohajirs, a group of Indian migrants, and the local Sindhi population. But the conflict in Pakistan is not really about two competing religions, since the country is made up of almost ninety-seven percent Muslims and was in fact created on the basis of a religious identity, but about the multiplicity of Islamic groups and their different agendas. Defining the ideal of an Islamic democracy has been difficult, with many sects advocating different opinions. Islamic Bangladesh is the most homogeneous by religion, language, and ethnicity. Its problem is which model of Islamic society to choose, given the various pressures of two competing countries, Iran and Saudi Arabia. A minority Hindu population is protected by constitutional and legal rights, but has occasionally been persecuted in retaliation for the treatment of Muslims in India.

The variety of religions in Malaysia has not always been well managed, as Muslims there demand greater privileges. Malaysia is both multiracial and multiethnic. The Malays, one-half of the country's population, are predominantly Muslims. Other ethnic groups include the Chinese (thirty-five percent), who are Buddhists, ethnic Indians (eleven percent), and a minority Christian population. A Malay-Muslim party has dominated politics, but is careful enough to resort to a strategy of multiracial coalition. The desire of the Malay Islamic intelligentsia to borrow heavily from Islam has generated negative responses among other ethnicities and religions. For many

years now, a number of Muslims have demanded the Islamization of Malaysia. Many politicians have capitalized on this, and have expressed anti-Zionist statements. The state has established an Islamic bank, supported the control of gambling among Muslims, and identified more closely with pan-Asian Islamic organizations. In public, Muslims have shown greater commitment through traditional dress and growing criticism of other religions. Islamic revival has led to many cases of tension, and even some migration to other places. Christian organizations seem insecure.

All of the experiences summarized here reveal challenges to authority, the failure of the political classes in many countries, and legitimate grievances against the state by religious and communal groupings. They show that the state, and in particular the secular ideologies that underpin it, is in

crisis in several places, and that religious communities want change and a different political or social system. In a number of countries, limited democratic space and authoritarian political apparatus makes it difficult to resolve issues in political, nonviolent ways. As the state extends its sphere to religious or quasireligious matters (e.g., laws on abortion, death, and the family), it meets with challenges from religious constituencies and provokes conflict. The state itself often becomes incapable of acting as an arbiter, and must resort to violence to solve religious and communal problems. There are places where people live in fear, provoked by demands for change and by state terror. States have used excessive force to ensure public order and control and to limit the impact of oppositional religious nationalism. Religious communities, too, become violent, and the specter of vengeance threatens a vicious circle of violence. It is clear that there is tension between the secular state and ethnic or religious communities in many parts of the world. Violence characterizes this tension, with the state being unable to prevent it or minimize its brutality. The state will always resist challenges to its authority and prevent secession.

The interpretation of what form the secular state should take differs from place to place. In some countries, demand favors a theocratic state, as among the Muslims in Nigeria, Malaysia, and Bangladesh. There are cases where one religious community will resent the attempt of another to impose its own identity, as in the case of Sri Lanka and Sudan. There are cases where minorities simply want the state to give them more rights and freedom, as is the case with Muslims in China and Sri Lanka, or Christians in Malaysia. In still other cases, a dominant religious community endeavors to prevent a minority religion from gaining influence, as in the case of Indian Hindus trying to arrest the rise of Islam.

Strategies for integrating religion into the state also differ widely. There are places that seek complete integration by constructing a

notion of the state based on religion, as in Iran, Bangladesh, or Pakistan. There are cases where national identity is constructed around religion, as with Buddhism in Sri Lanka and China. Where society has become secularized and where democratic values are entrenched, demands can center on the maintenance of separation between religion and the state. However, in the case of the United States, Christian fundamentalists continue to demand a society governed by strong Christian morals and values. Where, as in India, the state aspires to be secular, but the majority of the population is committed to their faith, the type of secular state that religious communities demand does not ignore religion entirely, but rather seeks to accommodate religious values and different traditions. And there are examples, as in Iran, Pakistan,

and Bangladesh, where the accommodation of radical Islam has encouraged a shift away from a secular state to an Islamic one.

The resolutions to these crises also vary. Some concessions are granted to minimize tension, but the state usually resists demands that will lead to separation or too much autonomy. In many cases, however, the conflict continues for a variety of reasons: the contending forces have not agreed upon how to resolve their differences, the state and the political classes profit from conflicts, there is no arbiter with the moral force to call enemies to order. The underlying causes of tension and violence remain. Given the experiences in other countries with religious violence, and given the unresolved tensions over the formulation of the Nigerian nationhood, we can expect religious problems to continue in Nigeria, although political and economic transformations may come to reduce their intensity and damage.

1

The Context: Islam, Christianity, and Interreligious Relations

Nigerian Islam

Islam has a longer history in Nigeria than does Christianity. At the beginning, Islam was a minority religion, but it spread gradually and became the dominant faith in the north during the nineteenth century; the present century has witnessed phenomenal growth in Nigerian Islam. The original expansion of Islam was made possible by the activities of merchants, missionaries, brotherhoods, and political leaders. Its spread was also facilitated by its appeals to new converts and by the jihads of the nineteenth century.

Established in seventh-century Arabia, Islam spread at a remarkable pace in the Middle East and North Africa, from where it spread further to West Africa.

1 As far back as the eighth century, traders plying trans-Saharan routes made contacts between North African Muslims and West Africans. As Islam spread, it was slowly transformed into a religion of the elite, specifically rulers and merchants. The Kanem-Borno empire to the northeast of Lake Chad was perhaps the first area to be exposed to Islam, but word gradually spread also to the Hausa and Kanuri people now in northern Nigeria, the Republic of Chad, and the Republic of Niger. A small Muslim community emerged in Kanem-Borno during the second half of the eleventh century, and it was rapidly integrated into political practices and court life. Islam made substantial inroads during the thirteenth-century reign of Dunama Dabbalemi, who led jihads and built a hostel in Cairo for Borno

pilgrims and students. Although Borno was marked by instability for most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the rise of Idris Alooma (1570-1602) restored order and support for Islam.

In the Hausa states, the course of Islamic expansion varied from one state to another.

2 Most accounts date the introduction of Islam to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By the seventeenth century, Islam had become well established in many northern Nigerian cities and capitals, which prided themselves on their Islamic merchants, Muslim scholars, and Islamic political figures. Political leaders enhanced their careers by waging successful jihads, building new mosques and Qur'anic schools, and recruiting Islamic scholars into their courts. The international Islamic world was important at that time as well, with some rulers involved in pilgrimages, diplomatic exchanges with Muslim leaders, and an international traffic of religious scholars. Literacy in Arabic was beginning to take roots, and Islamic education affected social and political life.³

Indigenous religious practices were still very much alive in the Hausa states, however. In Kanem-Borno, the king continued to maintain the age-long practice of seclusion. Other Hausa kings, not wishing to offend powerful cult priests, continued to practice the ancient rites. Many Muslim converts tolerated indigenous practices, and most of the rural areas were probably unaffected by Islam. The majority of political leaders did not seek full-scale application of al-Shari'a, and certainly no state could be described as a theocracy. Political leaders of the Muslim faith compromised with traditionalists and involved them in government. Conversion efforts existed, but usually on a small scale. The minority Muslim elite was generally tolerant of non-Islamic practices.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed important advances in the pervasiveness of Islam, as expansion occurred on many frontiers.⁴ Several Borno kings strengthened their commitment to Islam, and as a result, Muslim scholars enjoyed privileges and much of the population was converted. Islam began to penetrate central Nigeria and the forest region, especially among the southwestern Yoruba. Pockets of Muslim communities, constituting mainly foreign traders, grew up among the Borgu and Nupe. During the eighteenth century, Muslim communities were already well established in parts of the Oyo empire.⁵ But as before, many societies could still not be described as predominantly Islamic.

The nineteenth century was to mark the height of Muslim influence, due largely to the successful jihad of Usmanu dan Fodio, which triggered the establishment of Nigeria's first caliphate. The Sokoto-based caliphate was divided into emirates, and a single sultan oversaw all the emirs. A *qadi*,

or Islamic judge, saw to it that al-Shari'a was applied in court. Islamic law spread quickly over the wide region covered by the new theocratic caliphate.

6

The legacy of dan Fodio's jihad endures. Dan Fodio himself has become a household name, and a Sokoto university bears his name. When the British sought to overtake Sokoto, fear for the destruction of the jihad's legacy in law and education inspired many people to take up resistance. Of course, as one would expect, there was a dissonance between the movement's ideals as expressed in its writings and the day-to-day practical decisions of administration. Nevertheless, many of the Islamic reforms that dan Fodio set out to accomplish were achieved, such as the creation of a central imamate, the widespread rule of al-Shari'a, and a geographic expansion of Islam unprecedented in the region of the caliphate. Islam also made advances elsewhere during that time; the peaceful evangelization of previous years continued, as missionaries went further afield, and Islam gained more converts in places like Borno in the northeast,⁷ and among the Yoruba to the southwest.

The history of southwestern Nigeria merits special attention because it, along with the north, would become modern Nigeria's Islamic zone. (Eastern Nigeria has never been won over by Islam, which accounts for the fact that the east is free of Muslim-Christian violence.) The nineteenth century was undoubtedly the time when the Yoruba became a Muslim people. Islam was already established in a few urban areas, notably Ilorin, Badagri, Epe, and Lagos, but it was largely a minority religion for merchants, slaves, and traders, especially those of northern origin. The political elite avoided Islam because they associated it with trouble (as when the Muslim minority

in Oyo joined an 1817 rebellion), or because they felt their strength and legitimacy owed to a commitment to indigenous religions and practices. Islam nevertheless made significant inroads in the southwest during the nineteenth century. Dan Fodio's jihad created a southern caliphate with Ilorin as its capital. The Oyo empire fell in the 1830s, and many of its Muslims dispersed to Ibadan and Abeokuta, where they continued to practice Islam. After the challenge posed by the Ilorin military, which detracted Islam as an imperialist religion, was overcome, some areas that fell under Ilorin began to accept Islam. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Muslims constituted a vocal minority in most Yoruba towns, but because they were not persecuted, Islam gradually developed across the southwest. The allure of Islamic education, the increasing number of northern missionaries, and the increasing Muslim acceptance of the Yoruba traditional elite all helped to facilitate the spread of Islam.

Whereas dan Fodio and his associates decried the prevalence of un-Islamic practices in the Hausa states, the Yoruba Muslims found they had

to accommodate and incorporate some unorthodox beliefs that have tended to give Yoruba Islam a different orientation to the present day. Southwestern Muslims were less critical of Yoruba indigenous religion and political authority. Muslims did not encourage imams to displace the local kings or to turn the region into a theocracy. While the Muslims criticized what they called paganism, many aspects of traditional religions came to influence Islamic practices, or at least became tolerated to a degree that enabled people of different religions to coexist. Muslims did not call for al-Shari'a to displace local laws or to subvert local authorities. The Yoruba experienced a successful case of accommodation during the nineteenth century; this would prove later to minimize tension and violence in the region. Muslims in the southwest managed to construct an Islamic identity for themselves without calling for a jihad.

8

As Islam was spreading in the second half of the nineteenth century, Christianity was just laying its foundations. Whereas in the north, Christianity had to confront Islam as an established religion, the story was different in many Yoruba towns, where both religions appeared around the same time. Christianity's appropriation of Western education was to give it an edge, especially in those areas where education became highly prized.

The rise and fall of British rule provided the background for twentieth-century changes in the role of Nigerian Islam.⁹ Although the Muslim elite was originally hostile to the British, especially in the north, where it was worried about losing its political hold, there is not much truth to the assertion that the British authority was hostile to Islam. British colonial officers were ambivalent in their attitude to Islam, but consistent in a belief that irrational treatment of Muslims

would stand in the way of colonial objectives. It was not necessary to persuade colonial officers of the importance of Islam's role; what they wanted was to tap its advantages for their own benefit through a policy of paternalism. Muslims were regarded as more intelligent and civilized than adherents to traditional religions. Ironically, the Muslim elite was also preferred over Western-educated Nigerians, who came to be regarded as arrogant and impatient. Indeed, the British found it useful to minimize the influence of the Western-oriented elite by promoting the cause of Islam and its own elite. As far as the British were concerned, Nigerian Muslims and others would come in due course to accept the inherent superiority of European civilization. There was no point in antagonizing the emirs and the political class, who were needed to jointly run the administration under the arrangement of indirect rule.¹⁰ Emirs were assured by the British that there would be no colonial interference in Islam, and they were given the power over granting access to the Christian

missionaries who evangelized and resided in their areas. The British were cautious about introducing any policy expected to displease the Muslims and that had little connection to colonial objectives. They did not press hard, for instance, for introducing Western education into Muslim areas or for teaching the English language. The British manipulated the emirs while referring to the relationship as "collaboration," a strategy that conveniently implicated the emirs when certain decisions turned sour. It is no wonder, then, that not a few began to see the colonial officers and emirs as allies in exploitation.

In the early years of their encounters with colonialism, the Muslim elite was concerned about the consequences of accepting the infidel British as leaders, and organized resistance movements. The Sokoto and Kano emirates had to be forcefully subdued by British colonial authorities. Perhaps as a compromise, many Islamic scholars argued for the acceptance of British rule, since Muslims lacked the physical might to oust the colonizers, but for a refusal to submit spiritually and for laying in wait for an opportunity to rebel.

11 The messianic Mahdists refused to subscribe to this opinion, choosing instead to revolt and attempt to overthrow what they saw as "pagan" rule.¹² In 1906, they staged an uprising at Satiru, a town north of Sokoto.¹³ The uprising was crushed, but fear of the Mahdi lingered for twenty years at least. Mahdism was an idea and a movement that the colonialists could not crush.¹⁴ When resistance failed or when it was impossible even to embark upon resistance movements, many chose to flee rather than to embark on a jihad. After their defeat in 1903, many Mahdists left Nigeria and moved eastwards to Sudan, where their descendants live to this day.

Great changes occurred during the colonial period as Islam was able

to consolidate in the face of Western imperialism and the competition posed by Christianity. Islam spread to new areas at a rate that has been described as unprecedented.¹⁵ Many factors made this expansion possible: The railways, roads and enhanced communications enabled missionaries and scholars to travel more than ever before. Political power was controlled by the Muslims, and those who wanted to acquire it or to influence politics were wise to identify with Islam. The prestige of Islam was buttressed by the existence of emirs and the bureaucratic class. The Muslim control of trade in important goods like cattle and kola nuts provided Islamic missionaries and traders with the opportunity to reach out to many more people. The extension of the emirs' power over new areas further enhanced Islam's position a basis for both power and social cohesion.

Islam was not quite as popular in the south as it was in the north, but southern successes were recorded. In the Christian-dominated middle west

and east, minority Muslim communities could be found in urban centers and large towns.

16 It has been suggested, although without the support of documentary evidence, that the civil war of the 1960s frightened the small number of Igbo converts into dropping Islam; the war drove them back to their homeland, where they were faced with the common perception that Muslims were bent on destroying the Igbo. Islam had its greatest successes among the Yoruba, among whom over forty percent were converted. Pilgrimages became more and more popular, and converts returning from the Pilgrimage had greater prestige and were more committed to Islam and its growth. Whereas northern Muslims pulled themselves out of the Western school system altogether for fear of Christian domination, Yoruba Muslims were quick to establish Western-style schools of their own, where they added Islamic doctrine and the Arabic language to the curriculum. The Yoruba knew that in order for large numbers of Muslims to take part in politics and the civil service, they needed to acquire Western education, and in the process to modernize Islam or to pursue accommodationism. Education of the Muslims made it possible for them to produce religious literature written not only in Arabic but also in Yoruba and English. Printing presses dedicated to publishing prayerbooks and storybooks about Islam emerged in 1930.

Islam did have its share of problems under colonial rule. The Islamic jihad, intended to purify and spread Islam, became difficult to carry out, as the presence of the colonial government forestalled any new wars. Although the emirs had power, they were subordinated to white Christian officers, a point to which I shall return in the next chapter. Proposed modernizations of al-Shari'a did not sit well with the intelligentsia, who saw them as a threat to their power and to Islam as

a whole. Al-Shari'a was retained, but in a rather modified form. In the 1950s, the prospect of independence was in sight, but northerners feared that the southern elite (which they thought of as "Christians and pagans") might gain a disproportionate amount of power. Finally, while the colonial administration privileged Islam over Christianity in the north, it did little to promote the cause of Islam or to appease Muslims in central and southern Nigeria, where it did not fear the power of Islamic leaders.

The end of colonial rule in 1960 strengthened the Muslim elite's hand in creating an Islamic identity for modern Nigeria. Control of the federal government belonged to the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Ahmadu Bello, *Sardauna* of Sokoto and the head of the party, was committed to the spread of Islam and the identification of Nigeria as a member of the Muslim world. A Nigerian Muslim *umma* had emerged, united by religion,

although differences existed as to the interpretation of al-Shari'a and the Qur'an. The number of Muslims in the country is quite high (see the Appendix). The Muslim community can be described as transethnic, since it has tended to speak with a common voice, especially when it feels assaulted by the Christian community or the state. The construction of a transethnic Islamic community has been very much linked with the evolution of the Nigerian state itself.

The post-1950 political rivalry between the northern and southern political elites further politicized Islam. The dominant party in the north, the NPC, sought to bring northerners together under an Islamic political ideology, thereby winning political influence for itself and consolidate its power. In 1961, *Sardauna* Bello created the Jama'atu Nasril Islamiyya (Society for the Victory of Islam), or JNI, headquartered in Kaduna. It was originally limited to northern Muslims, but it began admitting southern Muslims and establishing branches in major southern cities in 1970. The JNI was also to speak with a common voice, and it ended up undermining the roles of the different brotherhoods that divided northern Muslims. The JNI was involved in determining such important Islamic policies as the dates of Ramadan, the education of girls, bringing in converts, and dealing with the problems associated with the pilgrimage. Since that time, umbrella organizations designed to promote the interests of Islam have become more common, and the model of JNI has often been duplicated. In 1973, for instance, the Islamic Council of Nigeria was created, headed by the sultan of Sokoto and including representatives from every state in the federation. The Council's mandate was to present a united Muslim front for dealing with government on matters affecting Islam.

A second, related development has been Nigeria's strengthened voice in the post-1960 Islamic world. Free of colonial rule, Islamic leaders in Nigeria found themselves able to broaden their network of power

and influence and to promote diplomatic relations with the Arab nations. The Muslim world is concerned with furthering the development of Nigerian Islam; Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Libya supply Nigeria with books, teachers, missionaries, and money for this purpose. Some external influences can be linked to Nigerian conflicts, as I shall discuss below; Libya and Sudan, in particular, have encouraged Muslims to be aggressive in their demands for al-Shari'a. Nigeria actively seeks help from the Muslim world as well. Through the 1970s, when manpower was scarce in the north, the government recruited personnel from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and other Muslim countries. Events in other parts of the Muslim world are reported to Nigerians in such a way as to consolidate Islamic solidarity.

An increased interest in the hajj, or pilgrimage to the holy land, has enhanced the internationalization of Nigerian Islam as well as the consolidation of the faith within Nigeria. In the 1950s, less than three thousand performed the hajj annually, and in the 1960s it was less than six thousand, but by the mid-1970s, over one hundred thousand Nigerian Muslims made the journey to Mecca. The government put the number at fifty thousand in the 1980s, although the actual number usually exceeds government estimates. Every pilgrim is considered to be an ambassador of Islam, and pilgrims add to the prestige of Nigeria in the Islamic world. They promote solidarity among themselves and with Muslims from other nations.

After the successful completion of the hajj, the attitude of pilgrims to Islam and society tends to undergo a change accompanying strengthened faith. Ordinary Muslims convert to Christianity with some regularity, but it is rare for an Alhajji or el-Hajjone who has made the hajj to do so. Pilgrimage tends to produce radical, devout Muslims in favor of Islamic reforms. The duration of the trip to Saudi Arabia may be short, but it is religiously intense. Prayers are held before and after departure. Some also fast and become generally more spiritual. Most of the time in the holy land is spent on religious duties and prayer. After the journey, many rededicate themselves and their lives to the cause of Islam.

Contrary to the thinking of many people, Islam helps its adherents to cope with the modern world. The Qur'an and Hadith may be ancient texts, but they can be, and are, interpreted and adapted to modern society. Conditions in modern Nigeria make such fresh and adaptive interpretations possible. There are few conditions in modern Nigeria, from political struggles to economic hardship, that Islam cannot respond to in a way that will either calm or radicalize Muslims. Islamic preachers and teachers present Islam as a coherent worldview that protects its followers from moral decadence, corrosion brought

about by industrialization, and political errors. Islam continues to spread, making the most of the mass media to reach old and new members.

Christianity

The history of Christianity in Nigeria is part of the larger history of European incursions into Africa, beginning in the mid-fifteenth century. Until the eighteenth century, early attempts to spread Christianity met with very limited success.

17 Largely secondary to mercantile interests, and marred by the employment of small numbers of missionaries with limited funds and

an inability to cope with the local climate and politics, initial evangelical enterprises were disastrous. Most missionary works were concentrated in Benin and Warri, where the Portuguese established contacts in the 1480s. In Benin, while the court accepted Christian modes of dress and found value in the Portuguese language, conversions were insincere, and the Catholic Church was frustrated in its attempts to make any major impact.

18 In the neighboring Itsekiri kingdom of Warri, Christianity arrived in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and made an impression on the court, with one or two kings claiming to have accepted the faith. These purported gains, however, did not last; by the end of the eighteenth century, the missionary enterprise had collapsed.¹⁹

The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a missionary revival, although Nigeria did not produce any significant success stories. This revival was connected with the abolition of the slave trade and the resurgence of missionary work in Europe.²⁰ In the second half of the century, the situation began to improve for the church. The missions revised their strategies to include a combination of methods: the use of indigenous clergy, increased direct competition with Islam, the posting of more men, greater financial support, and the creation of an economic base to support evangelization and create a new Christian elite through the promotion of commerce and agriculture. The abolition of slavery released a large number of people who could be called upon to assist in mission work.²¹ For a period of almost one hundred years, missionaries of various shades and characters worked energetically to evangelize millions of people.²²

Several influential studies have traced the outcome of missionary work in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ajayi and Ayandele have shown how the missions, especially the Church Missionary

Society (CMS), penetrated into the southwest, beginning in Badagry and moving later to Abeokuta and Lagos. In the 1850s, missions extended to Ibadan, Oyo, and Ile-Ife.²³ Tasie and Ekechi have provided accounts on successful penetration of the Niger Delta and the Igbo people in the east.²⁴ Between 1857 and 1890, Samuel Ajayi Crowther of the CMS worked hard to make a success of what is now known as the Niger Mission, a drive to spread Christianity in the Niger Delta. In the southeast, the Presbyterian Church acquired some influence and was successful in Calabar. Among the Igbo, the Roman Catholics established their own mission and also recorded numerous cases of conversion.

Almost everywhere during the last years of the nineteenth century, missionaries supported the partition of Africa in the belief that European rule would facilitate their work and enable them to demolish those aspects

of African culture which were thought to stand in the way of Christianity. Indeed, there were missionaries who believed that the agenda of colonialism in Africa was similar to that of Christianity. In the words of one such person, the Rev. Jan H. Boer of the Sudan United Mission:

Colonialism is a form of imperialism based on a divine mandate and designed to bring liberation spiritual, cultural, economic and political by sharing the blessings of the Christ-inspired civilization of the West with a people suffering under satanic forces of oppression, ignorance and disease, effected by a combination of political, economic and religious forces that cooperate under a regime seeking the benefit of both ruler and ruled.

25

Other missionaries might have made the point differently or less strongly, but the perception that their goals were colonial in spirit was very common.

The missionaries adopted a variety of strategies to evangelize and endear themselves to the people: they used church services and open-air and door-to-door teaching sessions, and they built mission houses to lodge converts and strengthen their faith, hospitals to cure illness and propagate the faith, and schools to convert children.²⁶

During the colonial period, missionary work expanded in scale and scope. New areas were reached, more missions and preachers came on the scene,²⁷ and Nigerians acquired more influence and played a more prominent role in establishing new missionary opportunities. New schools were established and old ones expanded not just to teach but to convert students to Christianity. More aggressive evangelists, including women and people without a connection to the mission churches of the nineteenth century, worked in scattered areas to win more souls.²⁸ In addition, many independent churches emerged under

the control of Nigerians with messages and organizations different from those of the mission churches. As many studies have shown, the character of these churches varied, although they tended to have a commitment to faith healing and were controlled by Africans.²⁹ In addition, there were among them those that rejected colonialism, doubted the reliance on Western medicine, and opposed excessive elitism based on Western education. They have been treated as part of the anticolonial protest movement and as an attempt to blend aspects of African cultural values with Christian doctrines.

By the end of the colonial period, Christianity had emerged as the dominant religion in eastern Nigeria and as a major religion in west and central Nigeria. Nigeria never had a government that discouraged evangelization. In the east, the Anglicans intensified their activities in the Niger Delta, the Catholics used the schools to increase their influence among the

Igbo, and other missions worked hard to reach as many areas as possible. In the western part of the country, no area was unaffected by missionary activity. In central Nigeria, the Roman Catholic Mission and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) established many churches among the Idoma, Jukun, and Tiv.

30

The case of the Islamic north has always been problematic for Christianity.³¹ During the nineteenth century, many missionaries had hoped to add the north to the Christian kingdom, but only a few dedicated missionaries could tolerate Islam. Many were already conditioned to think that Christianity was superior to Islam. In addition, some missionaries went to the extent of thinking that the Islamic religion was a creation of the devil, one that was incapable of bringing liberty, justice, and freedom to human-kind.³² The influential Walter Miller, the famous Anglican leader of the Hausa mission, assumed such a negative connection between Islam and evil that he attributed to it the existence of such social problems as poverty and bad morality. Muslims deserved to be pitied, many missionaries thought, because as long as they kept to their religion, they would be cursed to remain uncivilized. This arrogant view persisted and contributed in no small way to the hostility between the two religions.

The early conversion strategy in the north was simple and perhaps primitive. Some CMS missionaries had thought that what was necessary was to reach the Hausa and expose the intellectual bankruptcy of the Islamic religion. A people like the Hausa, with their intelligence and skill, should have nothing to do with Islam, they thought. The missionaries were disappointed. Efforts were renewed during the colonial period, with the expectation that the new administration would facilitate evangelical work. The missions

thought that they could consolidate in central Nigeria. The Roman Catholics and the Sudan Interior Mission opened new locations in central Nigeria, and the Anglicans moved northward to establish a small mission in Zaria in 1905.

Evangelization in the Islamic north was more difficult than had been anticipated. The colonial government was cautious in the extreme, not allowing Christian missions to operate as they would have liked. New missions required the permission of emirs. When this was granted, it was done so with reluctance; missionaries were either expected to work far away from the city center, or among immigrant communities in the Sabon Gari ("new city" or "stranger's ward"). By 1910, only the CMS missions at Zaria and Bida and the Sudan Interior Mission at Patigi were active. For most of the colonial period, missionaries regarded British officers as enemies who hindered their work and who allowed Islam to spread at the expense of Christianity.

Killing the spirit of the missionaries was difficult indeed. They never

attributed failure to themselves, but usually to the evil power of Islam, to lack of support from the colonial administration, or even to the limited enthusiasm of northerners. Some missions and missionaries were extremely critical of the British policy of indirect rule, not because they did not like the theory that informed it, but because its application was too protective of Islam and prevented Christian evangelization.

33

If the far north could not be won, the Christians thought, the Islamic frontier could at least be prevented from extending further. By about 1910, it appeared that many missions had come to the determination that the people of central Nigeria would be their targets, since they were still regarded as "pagans" who could be prevented from falling to Islam. Indeed, this appeared to be the strategy of Christianity worked out in Europe in the early years of the century.³⁴ Central Nigeria was not to be as easily converted as the Christians thought; the Sudan United Missionaries that worked in the plateau village of Forum from 1910 to 1921 recorded only three successful cases of converts. Conversion methods were thought to be faulty, at least in the case of the SUM, which set out to purify behaviors and attitudes in order to eliminate drinking and idolatrous practices among its new converts.³⁵ There were also other problems such as the multiplicity of languages, a limited number of missionaries, and a lack of Nigerian involvement in the enterprise.

But in the end, the missionaries prevailed, partly because they were able to revise their methods of conversion, and also because a number of aspects of colonial change worked in their favor. The Bible was translated into several local languages, there were educated Nigerians to assist in evangelization, and the use of schools became effective.

Nigerian converts joined missionaries to propagate the faith. Dispensaries and schools were magnets that attracted new converts. In the north, the missions concentrated on converting and strengthening the faith of the immigrant population, notably southerners in the Sabon Gari. Many of the Catholic churches in Yola, Kano, Maiduguri, Jimeta and other localities began drawing from among these immigrants. Perhaps the only Christian community that drew on the local population was Miller's in Zaria, founded in 1905 and subsequently transferred in 1928 to the neighboring district of Wusasa.

By the waning years of colonial rule, Christianity had become firmly entrenched in central Nigeria and had penetrated many other areas in the north, including Sokoto, the capital of the caliphate, and Maiduguri, a northeast Kanuri town. Missions and churches had learned to come together, to create strength in unity and cooperation. The Sudan Interior Mission brought its churches together in the Evangelical Churches of West

Africa (ECWA). Nigerian Christianity, though controlled and dominated by foreign missionaries, was heavily influenced by an indigenous clergy.

Christianity has continued to spread since Nigeria's independence. All missions have done well in increasing their membership and places of worship. Power was transferred to Africans in many of the mission churches. Nigerian-led indigenous churches have proliferated quickly and continuously. The churches vary a great deal, as many studies on Pentecostal and charismatic movements have indicated. Consequently, unity among Christians has been complicated by the variety of religious organizations and doctrines. It is difficult for a national Christian leader to emerge and to enjoy the loyalty and support of such a high number of diverse organizations. It was only the threat of Islam that forced them to come together in the 1970s under the common umbrella of the Christian Association of Nigeria.

Christianity faces two major problems today. The first is the threat posed by Islam, although each generation perceives this threat differently. Early in this century, as previously mentioned, the fear was rekindled by a drive for Islamization by Sardauna Bello of Sokoto in order to convert the northern Christians and "pagans" to Islam. For most of the 1960s and 1970s, the response among the Christian intelligentsia was to seek a peaceful coexistence. The Roman Catholic Church went as far as to call for global cooperation with Islam.

36 While its priests were free to be aggressive in spreading the gospel, it was expected that they would be cautious in attacking the Islamic faith. In many towns, religious leaders took it upon themselves to establish some loose associations to enhance dialogue. In 1974, the Roman Catholic Church sponsored a well publicized conference between Christians and Muslims to discuss their common ground and to seek the means to prevent hostility.

The second obstacle faced by Christianity has been the diminishing capacity of Christians to use schools and health institutions to evangelize. Throughout the nineteenth century and for most of the colonial period, the church was able to attract thousands of people to the education and the health services offered by different missions. After independence, the Islamic challenge began to diminish the role of the church. Muslims argued that their children had been seduced to Christianity by these services. They began to create their own institutions and pressured the state to acquire and de-Christianize mission schools and hospitals. In this, Muslims have been very successful, especially in the north. As the country grew richer with oil revenues, the Nigerian government decided that one of its principal functions was to create nondenominational health and educational institutions, even to the extent of nationalizing mission hospitals and schools.

Interreligious Relations

As in many other African countries, the failure of the nation-state and of secular ideologies have enhanced the relevance of religion.

Religion continues to provide many alternatives to social ills: hope that the future will be bright for millions of people traumatized by the failure of government; the emotional strength to handle stress; shared identity for the hopeless and the marginalized in cities and towns; respect and status within missionary hierarchies; and social support for women troubled by poverty, childlessness, and spousal abuse. To those who yearn for power or democracy, religious organizations provide leadership opportunities in the establishment and administration of new branches. Where religion is lucrative, more than a few have made a business of it, using their charisma and organizational ability to raise money in novel ways.

Both major Nigerian religions tend to see one another as rivals fighting for control of converts and of the state itself. Mahdist Muslims are critical of Christians, and many Christian missionaries fear and detest Islam. The early Christian missionaries knew little or nothing about Islam, characterizing it as a supporter of slavery and violence, an attitude that remains entrenched today. "Spreading the gospel" meant more than introducing Christianity; it also implied fighting Islam. In central Nigeria, where the missionaries realized the weakness of Islam, evangelization acquired the characteristics of a battle.

There are, of course, regional differences among the Nigerian people. In the east, the predominance of Christians has ensured that Islam poses little or no threat or even competition to Christianity. In the west, both religions have a long history of peaceful coexistence, although competition is not uncommon. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Muslims sent their children to Christian

schools and used their hospitals, maternity centers and dispensaries.

37 Both Islam and Christianity failed to displace many aspects of Yoruba culture, enabling the Yoruba to moderate their tensions and competitions in constructive ways. North-central Nigeria has a large Christian population, and the rest of the region is predominantly Islamic. For many years, northern Islam has been prone to fundamentalism and Mahdism, both of which contribute to the radicalization of the religion and of politics. The northern Islamic elite is opposed to the spread of Christianity in the region. Today, each religion presents itself as the better alternative. As I shall observe in chapter 9 below, the strong language employed in this competition fuels the tension.

Some of the issues that generated crisis and violence in the 1970s and

beyond had their origins in the colonial period. Among the leading bones of contention are Western civilization, education and the legal system. As we have seen, colonial policies contributed to sharpening differences and clashes in values between Muslims and Christians. Northern protection of Islam antagonized the Christian missionaries who wanted to evangelize, spawning two virtual nations within onean Islamic north and a Christian south.

Christianity created a new elite more attuned to the increasing spread of Western civilization, which contributed to the emergence of Nigerian nationalism.

38 Among the elite was a new middle class interested in wage labor, who dominated Nigerian modernization. The dominance of the Christian elite in the state bureaucracy and political parties, combined with the interests of the colonizing power, lent substantial support to the introduction of Western secular ideologies. A Western-oriented Christian elite has historically supported the idea of a secular Nigerian state. In the 1940s and 1950s, many members of this elite hoped to benefit from the transfer of power, an ambition which radicalized them in their struggles to end British rule. Since independence, the Christian elite has been at the fore-front of promoting the secular state and the spread of Western formal education, largely drawing their ideas from the West.

Many Muslims refused to reconcile spiritually with colonial conquest. This spiritual withdrawal took the form of rejecting Western values. Among the Yoruba and also among the ruling class in the north, the strategy was not to oppose the British, but to seek the means to minimize the dangers that their rule posed to those in political power and to Islamic interests. Muslims were originally uncomfortable with Western education and resented Christian proselytizing.³⁹ This

reaction can be explained in several ways. Muslims were threatened by the new culture, fearing that it could erode or displace their own. As useful as Western education was for mobility, Muslims feared that the missionary schools would push for conversion of students. Because the colonial administration needed the service of Western-trained people, the need arose to promote Western education. What the British did in some instances was to allow Arabic ideas to be taught side by side with Western values.

In the 1940s and beyond, Muslims were more than ready to accept Western education, if only to avoid being dominated by the southern elite in the civil service and other affairs. However, many still wanted the formal school system to be integrated with Qur'anic principles. Schools were opened for children in Katsina and other Islamic areas. In Kano, which was becoming more and more industrial, the need to acquire skills for factory work encouraged the establishment of general, technical, and vocational

schools. Radical northern politicians began to criticize the policy of indirect rule, which placed minimal attention on education, and advocated a rapid expansion of the school system.

One other arena in which differences in values have continued to foment unrest is the legal system. As far as the Christian elite is concerned, Western laws are good for the country, and can be modified to suit local customs, if necessary, but they should be adopted. Indeed, law became a prestigious career among the emerging southern elite. But many members of the Islamic elite aspire to a different legal code. Even today, many Muslims, especially the 'ulama, continue to argue for the adoption of al-Shari'a.

40 To the Muslim intelligentsia of the colonial period, British rule gradually destroyed the legal foundations of the Sokoto caliphate. They felt the British recognized the worth and relevance of al-Shari'a, which was why they originally allowed it in the north, but banned it in other parts of the country with large Islamic populations, especially among the Yoruba.⁴¹ However, even in the north, the British set out to destroy al-shari'a. They subordinated Muslim judges to the European administrators, who had the power to review all decisions and to reverse judgements. After 1914, Western laws were gradually introduced in order to erode al-Shari'a and curtail its spread, and customary Western laws were preferred to Islamic law. By 1958, they had succeeded in making Western laws the only legitimate basis for criminal trials. Summarizing this commonly held position, Alhaji Mahmud, the influential *Grand Khadi* of Bauchi state in the 1980s, wrote that the British portrayed al-Shari'a as "an unjust, biased and discriminatory system which had no laid rules and regulations."⁴² He concludes thus:

Before leaving this country, they left all the weapons with which they

fought Islam to the non moslem Nigerians to complete the task of uprooting the Islamic system of law which is based on Principles of Islam. That is the seed of discord they planted between us and our fellow non-moslem Nigerians which has today led to fighting amongst ourselves.⁴³

Alhaji Abubakar Gumi, an Islamic leader whose career is part of the events that are analyzed in this book,⁴⁴ agrees with Mahmud. As the *Grand Khadi* of the northern region immediately after independence, he was critical of the British for not only destroying al-Shari'a, but also for ensuring that the newly independent country should do without it:

One of my earliest observations in respect of the Shari'a Court of Appeal was the conspiracy involved in restricting its jurisdiction to personal laws. In the first instance, there was a deliberate misuse of the term "personal laws." Strictly

considered, the term should only apply to those social practices which affect the individual alone and no one else in the community. Such things may be confined to the individual's preference with regard to food, drink or colour of clothes. But so long as the situation involves more than the individual it can not possibly be regarded as being personal. To this extent, cases like those concerning marriage, divorce, inheritance, endowments and custody of children are not personal but civil. By isolating them under "personal laws," however, the colonial authorities ensured that the Shari'a Courts did not achieve prominence as being competent enough to handle civil cases.

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According to Gumi, not enough cases were tried in the court of al-Shari'a, since all civil cases went to the Magistrate Courts:

This was done intentionally to undermine the regulatory effect of the religion on the people's social life. Actually, even the jurisdiction granted to the Shari'a Courts in respect of the so-called personal laws was only because the Magistrate Courts were unable to handle them. This became clear whenever we sat with the High Court to hear appeals jointly involving personal laws and civil or criminal cases. Most of the cases in Northern Nigeria courts at that time were civil and there were relatively few criminal cases. Rarely did one hear reports of murder or embezzlement. This was often why there were less cases in the Magistrate and High Courts whereas the Area Courts were always congested, often leading to unfair practices.⁴⁶

As we shall see later, the demand for al-shari'a became a major religious and political issue after the mid-1970s.

While all the aforementioned issues were important during colonial rule (and even after), the British administration carefully avoided the creation of a formal or public role for religion. Not that it failed to recognize the existence and spread of both religions, but it chose instead to secularize by introducing the institutions and structures of

the new nation-state, which were then transferred to the Nigerian people at independence.

During the colonial period, aspiring politicians began to look for symbols and ideologies that they could manipulate to build a following and gain power. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a political figure of note, appropriated a Yoruba myth that placed human creation at Ile-Ife in building a powerful cultural organization, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, which was to become the nucleus of the Action Group. Others like Aminu Kano, the founder of Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), connected with the poor through socialism. Other astute politicians realized the force of religion in mobilizing people; when Nnamdi Azikiwe established the National Church of Nigeria and Cameroon, for instance, he did so not be-

cause he was himself religious, but in order to mobilize the faithful against the colonial administration.

47

As if to anticipate the post-independence crisis, a media controversy in 1949 brought the emerging politics of religion into the open. On Sunday, 20 February 1949 one Gideon M. Urhobo, life president of the God's Kingdom Society, addressed an audience in Lagos on "Scriptural Commentary, Jesus, Muhammad, and Zik." The lecture was subsequently published in the 1 March 1949 edition of *The African Pilot*, a newspaper controlled by Nnamdi Azikiwe, the influential leader of the NCNC. Urhobo argued that Jesus Christ was the only true prophet and the only means to salvation. He moved next to a discussion of the Prophet Muhammad with the intention of destroying his mission and the religion that he founded. Urhobo said that Muhammad was not sent by the true God, that he prophesied nothing, that he was illiterate, a murderer, and an ignorant sinner. He opined that the Qur'an was useless, unrevealing on the subject of God, and "the work of magicians and opposers of the Almighty God and His Kingdom."⁴⁸ The final section was devoted to the praise of Azikiwe, whom he compared to Jesus Christ. He called on all Nigerians to support Azikiwe not only for his ability to change the country but also in order to bring the Kingdom of God to the people.

The northern elite responded swiftly to this media attack. Sa'ad Zungur, the fiery nationalist who initially accepted Azikiwe's leadership in spite of opposition from the majority of northern politicians, replied on the pages of the same newspaper with a request that Urhobo withdraw his infidel statements against the Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁹ Zungur's argument revealed a sincere commitment to building a united Nigeria. Obstacles to the unity of Nigeria, he pointed

out, should be destroyed, including divisive religious elements. Zungur described Urhobo as an opportunist whose views would not help Nigerian nationalism or even Azikiwe. "Such an attitude," Zungur wrote, "is sure to evoke a theological discord in this country which, in turn, will destroy the very superstructure which Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe has laboured for ten years to erect on very firm foundations."⁵⁰ Zungur noted that using religion to build a political party was dangerous for the country, adducing the example of Gandhi in India. Muslims ought not to be driven out of Zikism by people like Urhobo, a "politico-religious opportunist."⁵¹ He concluded with a rather prophetic statement that the attack of one religion by another would weaken the country's nationalism.

Many other Muslims reacted more angrily, sending letters of protest to the government. The political rivals of Azikiwe and his newspaper joined the Muslims in attacking *The African Pilot*, Zikists, and Azikiwe himself. A

Daily Service editorial headlined "Obscene Libel" called Urhobo's article "blasphemous and most wicked," and Azikiwe a "false prophet" and a "false god" who preached half-baked political doctrines and strange religion to "impressionable youths." Zikism, the editorial claimed, was a dangerous and strange doctrine, desecrating all that was sacred to "prove that its new clay-footed god is greater than all the sages and prophets of old." If the people could tolerate a lot of "puerile nonsense" in politics, then "when it comes to the matter of their worship, they would not stand for any scandalous railery." The editorial called on the government to do something about this "evil influence which, if allowed to continue with impunity, is sure, sooner or later, to cause great commotion and serious disturbance of peace in the country." The Muslims, too, were advised to do whatever was reasonable to preserve the name of the Prophet.

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Through the British officer, the Resident of the Sokoto Province, the sultan made it known that he found the article offensive. At first, Sultan Abubakar limited his remarks to saying that the government should not allow offensive essays to be printed in newspapers that circulated in the Muslim areas. Sa'ad Zungur's rejoinder was pointed to the sultan, who said that "it would therefore be wise to ignore the matter and let the various Zikist factions fight and perhaps destroy each other."⁵³ However, Sultan Abubakar, perhaps now influenced by religious and political leaders, decided to pursue the matter further. On 29 April 1949, he wrote to the Resident in Sokoto, saying in part:

This is the most distressing article we have ever seen and heard of. I think it is high time that these fanatics stop trying to cause any friction among the Nigerian Elements. I take a very grim view of this and for this reason I should like to let you know that I am going to take up the matter with all the Chiefs I shall meet at Kaduna next week and then petition to the Chief

Commissioner on the subject.⁵⁴

The sultan referred the matter to the joint meeting of the House of Chiefs and the House of Assembly held at Kaduna on 9 May. Some Muslim leaders requested that the government consider the attack in light of the Qur'anic law on apostasy and blasphemy, which crimes, the sultan felt, merited the death penalty. Unsure what the colonial authority would do on such an issue, they directed that the matter be referred to the Crown Counsel for purposes of prosecuting Urhobo and *The African Pilot*. The secretary to the northern provinces requested that the central authority in Lagos institute proceedings, promising to provide witnesses willing to testify that the publication was a "public insult to their religion."⁵⁵ Lagos chose not to

prosecute on the grounds that the government could lose the case on a technicality, preferring not to prosecute at all rather than to prosecute unsuccessfully. Instead, the attorney general held a press conference to warn the media about the danger of attacks on religion.

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The editors of *The African Pilot*, sensing that the article was generating political trouble, dissociated themselves from it. They said it was a paid advertisement printed in the spirit of religious tolerance. Without apologizing on behalf of Urhobo, *The African Pilot* affirmed its belief that the Islamic faith contained the "most valuable ideals" and that it was its policy never to criticize any faith or belief.⁵⁷ The central executive body of the Zikist movement also disowned Urhobo's lecture, assuring its members that Zikism would not become a creed, had room for people of all faiths, and was fully aware of the "baneful effect on [the] world's history of religious bigotry."⁵⁸

Even if it was not the intention of *The African Pilot* or the Zikist Movement to attack any faith or belief, the attempt to promote the personal interest of Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose large ambition was to lead the country to independence as its first leader, had two religious dimensions which could generate trouble. First, Urhobo and a small number of Zikists were promoting the image of Azikiwe as a god and trying to turn his political party into a religious organization. Urhobo called Azikiwe a prophet of the likes of Jesus and Muhammad, a view that other writers endorsed as well.⁵⁹ The opposition of the northern Islamic intelligentsia did not stop Urhobo and others from pursuing the idea of "Zik and the National Church." In 1950, a few members were still talking about the control of a national church by the Zikists and turning parts of the Zikist manifesto into church hymns.⁶⁰ Zikism eventually collapsed, but the idea of using religion for politics did not

die with it.

Second, *The African Pilot* and many other southern newspapers painted the north as having been made conservative by Islam. Conservatism, they argued, prevented nationalism from emerging in the north; the southern elite would have to infiltrate and radicalize. This position angered most northern political and religious leaders:

In many respects the North was held with absolute contempt because of its unique historical and cultural circumstances. The region, thus, came to be equated with everything backward and unprogressive. The average Nigerian from the South never really accepted the man from the North as a fellow citizen. It had often been said that for the Southern Nigerian, he was the only Nigerian; the Northern Nigerian was, but a Northerner. This was his attitude even if he was living in the North.⁶¹

What Azikiwe could not accomplish was possible in the north, where most politicians used Islam to gain power and construct an ethnic/religious ideology of a unified north. The Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) succeeded in building a strong party, strictly limited to the north and united by Islam under *Sardauna* Alhajji Ahmadu Bello.

62 When the *Sardauna*, partly out of a desire to halt the spread of Christianity and turn the north into a religiously homogeneous region, embarked on conversion campaigns in central Nigeria, he triggered anti-Islam and anti-Hausa/Fulani protests in many areas.⁶³

Very quickly, Muslim politicians began to establish important links with other Muslim countries such as Kuwait, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in order to benefit from the presence of a larger Islamic world. In the 1950s, the NPC was accused of creating alliances with Egypt and the Islamic League in order to establish a Muslim empire in Nigeria.⁶⁴ External Islamic organizations reciprocally tried to penetrate the country, donating personnel, funds, and books designed to propagate Islam and to strengthen diplomatic ties. The International World Islamic Congress, headed by the king of Saudi Arabia, was very active in Nigeria in the 1950s, establishing contacts with Nigerian Islamic leaders and making fairly significant donations.⁶⁵

Religion is used to consolidate existing identities and to forge new ones. In northern Nigeria, Islam successfully merges with ethnicity to create the political concept of a unified north. To the ethnic minorities in central Nigeria, mass conversion to Christianity and their continuous adherence to it has been effectively connected with the need to strengthen their identity and create a powerful ideology to resist Islam and the power of the Hausa-Fulani political class. A study by Niles Kastfelt demonstrates how the minorities in Adamawa turned

to Christianity in the period between 1940 and 1960 in order to unite and build two major political parties the United Middle Belt Congress and the Middle Zone League to represent them in a federal system and to negotiate with the ruling party, the Northern People's Congress. The Christians turned their churches into branches of political parties and created, out of religion, a culture of resistance.⁶⁶ Such a tradition of using religion for constructing identity continued after independence, as documented by Yusuf Turakin,⁶⁷ and continues today.

In western Nigeria, Muslims attempted gradually to create an identity based on Islam, while at the same time preserving their Yoruba ethnicity. A small Muslim elite increasingly asserted itself and demanded Islamic schools for its children. As early as 1924, an organization known as The Islamic Society of Nigeria had been formed to

promote the interests and well-being of the Muslims in general and of the Muslim community of Nigeria in particular, and in that respect, to found, build and maintain educational institutions, with the view to disseminating true knowledge of Islam; inaugurate and maintain classes, lectures and such similar activities as the Society may deem fit from time to time; [and] maintain libraries.

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Many of the activities of the Society, and organizations similar to it, were social in nature. They tried to forge a strong Islamic community through such activities as the sponsorship of Qur'anic schools, and they demanded more secular schools that catered to Muslims. In the 1950s, even a political party, the Muslim United Party, emerged to seek power, although it was very unsuccessful.⁶⁹

In a variety of ways, both religions have served as effective tools for the creation and consolidation of group identity and unity. Such religion-oriented identities are quite strong; all Nigeria can be described as many nations within one. Religion reinforces ethnicity and shapes identities by creating sturdy group differences. The troubles of the 1980s and 1990s have further encouraged the consolidation of these new identities.

Since the 1980s, forms of identities have multiplied, consciousness has sharpened, and self-identification has begun to be taken more seriously than before. This is not the place to detail these changes, but a few points are necessary to my argument. The Nigerian school system continues to be a venue for both learning and evangelization. More and more, religious organizations seek to control schools or influence their curricula in order to obtain more converts. Muslims have been successful in preventing the teaching of other religions in their schools, restricting the teaching of Christianity and protecting a

variety of courses in Arabic and Islamic education. Countless numbers of religious youth organizations designed to strengthen faith and champion the cause of religion have emerged from the schools. There are nonscholastic religious associations of various types, many transcending geography and ethnicity. Muslims have accomplished a number of large-scale goals, such as their establishment of the Muslim Red Crescent Organization, which functions like the Red Cross, but without the Christian influences. The Muslim Red Crescent has its own uniform, performs some services to mosques, and participates in the local organization of the hajj. Today, both religions are interested in shaping the character of the state and attaining numerical superiority. In the 1960s, a number of Christian commentators argued that the Church should distance itself from politics,⁷⁰ but since the 1980s Christianity has struggled hard to be active in politics. Now both Islam and Christianity are engaged in politics as well

as the age-old rivalry for converts. Religion divides Nigerians, accentuates ethnic differences among them, and reinforces the North-South polarity.

Summary

Because contemporary religious issues are so closely intertwined with the roots of violence in Nigeria, I close by restating certain issues that should be kept in mind as the rest of the present study unfolds.

Islam

Nigeria has a substantial Muslim population that cannot be ignored or treated as inconsequential by the government. Because of their number, colonial and postcolonial states have been careful not to implement policies that will antagonize Muslims. New policies are carefully considered to ensure that Muslims are not displeased. Neither can the country itself, because of its size, be treated as an insignificant member of the Muslim world.

Devout Muslims and Islamic political leaders have historically been concerned with the issues of building an ideal Islamic society and fostering relations with non-Muslims. Until dan Fodio's nineteenth-century jihad, peaceful coexistence was common and desirable to Muslims. The jihad attempted to reform Islam and succeeded in securing a large number of converts. For most of the twentieth century, many Muslims have accepted the presence of the Christian population and recognized the need to coexist with them. The claim made by some Christians in the 1980s, therefore, that Islam was opposed to a plural society, is untrue. Indeed, there have been accommodationist periods in the history of Islam when Muslims allowed themselves to be more or less completely integrated into the surrounding society.

Islam has a tradition of militancy. While many take a quiescent approach to gaining converts and fortifying the faith, some believe that jihad is the only way to purify Islam and overcome paganism entirely. To Muslims bent on jihad, coexistence and accommodation are unnecessary, and even unacceptable. There have been jihadist periods in Nigeria's history, when Muslim leaders preached radicalism and the need for an ideal Islamic state. Revivalism has been a constant thread in Nigerian Islam. But even among change-seeking Muslims, there is no consensus as to whether gradual reforms, missionary work, or a swift revolution is the best approach.

Judging from colonial history, Nigerian Muslims are capable of responding calmly to a secular state. While a number of Muslims hoped to

see the end of the colonial state, they were satisfied with the right to practice their religion and to maintain a distance from Western ideas and anti-Islamic values. There were those who sought reconciliation both with the secular authority and indigenous culture without bringing their own commitment to the faith into doubt.

Nigerian Muslims have always stressed connection with the international Islamic community. Connections with Saudi Arabia and North Africa were crucial to the early development of Nigerian Islam, and external links were important also when Nigeria was under colonial rule. Such links have been retained, with implications both for the development of the religion and its consequences on politics. Since the 1980s, Nigerian Islamic organizations have intensified their contacts with the Muslim world in order to gain support, sympathy, and cooperation for their struggle.

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Christianity

Since its introduction to Nigeria, Christianity has had to specifically address the issue of its relevance to Nigerians. Originally, the problem was its foreign rituals, symbols, and teachings; indigenous churches emerged partly to make Christianity more relevant. During this century, Christianity has been associated with imperialism and materialism, an image the church has actively fought against.

Beginning with the emergence in the 1890s of independent churches, fundamentalist and revivalist movements have been strong in Nigeria. Characterized by an emphasis on African dignity and pride, and usually controlled by charismatic Nigerian leaders, these churches tend to be uncompromising in their relations with Islam. The post-1975 Islamic tendency toward radicalism and fundamentalism have

been evident among Christians as well, partly because of the Nigerian state's failure to meet the expectations of its citizens, and partly because of the increased challenge posed by Islam.

Nigerian Christianity has always been connected to external forces. Foreign missionaries were responsible for Christianity's spread in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and early missionaries were perceived by many indigenous authorities as agents of imperialism. Established mission churches were tied to organizations headquartered in Europe and the United States. Although the independent churches were founded and led by Nigerians, many still benefit from connections outside the country by way of financial assistance, gifts of tracts and Bibles, and visits from foreign preachers. The impact of North American evangelical missions has been particularly great.

Until the 1880s, a main concern of Nigerian Christians was the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Thereafter, the focus changed to merely limiting further expansion of Islam, which missionaries achieved by converting "pagans" before the Muslims could get to them. The majority of the Christian missionaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries regarded Muslims as inferior, but some went further and associated Islam with evil. Until the 1980s, the Christian-Muslim rivalry did not degenerate into conflict or violence, and there were many southern Christians who were indifferent to the existence of Islam. Indeed, in the 1960s and 1970s, attempts were made to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue and to seek some common ground.

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Christianity since the 1980s has been characterized by militancy, aggression, and resurgence. There has been a global growth in Christian evangelism in such diverse places as South Africa, Central and South America, the United States, the Philippines, and Nigeria. A Christian organization has yet to engage in violence against the state or incite demand for a Christian Nigerian state, and there is no Christian analogue to the Muslim idea of *umma*. Nor is there a Christian code of law like *al-Shari'a* that could be imposed in Nigeria. Perhaps because of their advocacy of a separation between church and state, Christians tend to be less militant in engaging the state than do Muslims. In spite of this, Christians frequently contribute to Nigerian tension by (a) using militant rhetoric, (b) displaying great hostility to Islam, and (c) claiming the Islamic north is an obstacle to Nigeria's development.

As is the case with Islam, there is now a great resurgence in Christian activities, marked most notably by an increase in evangelization and

the establishment of hundreds of small evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic churches. Worship is intense, beliefs are strong and conservative, conversion is aggressive, and the use of mass media and open-door fellowships is on the rise. Revivalist churches condemn mainstream Protestants and Catholics, whom they accuse of taking Christianity too lightly, but they reserve their worst criticisms for the Muslims, whom they demonize outright. Muslims have once again become "pagans" in need of conversion and salvation. In tone, style and approach, the revivalists show no sympathy for people of different faiths, no tolerance for opposing views, and no desire to understand other perspectives. Uncompromising and militant, their attitude seems to be that there is only one path to God. Islamic preachers react to this attack by fighting back, by creating Muslim analogues of Christian organizations (the Red Crescent, for example), by beefing up their missionary activities, and also through anti-Christian militancy.

2

The Context: The Nigerian State in Historical Perspective

Our study of contemporary violence and aggression in modern Nigeria would not be adequately grounded without complementing the religious history of Nigeria from the last chapter with an analysis of Nigerian political history.

1 Besides being the major locus of power in Nigeria and the sole controller of oil revenues, which make up the majority of Nigeria's financial resources, the Nigerian state is relevant to our study for a number of other reasons. The history of Nigeria's evolution as a state partly accounts for the fact that Christians and Muslims have had to live in the same country and coexist in certain places. The political actors that control the state seek the means to profit from religion in a variety of ways by using it to acquire power, stabilize or destabilize politics, consolidate political constituencies, and reinforce ethnic identities. The need to control the state has been a major factor in explaining the recent clashes between the Muslims and Christians. Religion enters the picture largely because it has become part and parcel of resolving the difficulty in creating an enduring Nigerian nation-state. As a political apparatus, the state dominates Nigeria in terms of distributing political power, constructing social classes, and distributing resources among members of the federation. The state manages the economy and lays the conditions for relations pertaining to property and capital. Controlled by an ambitious and greedy elite, the state is both an organ of capital and an instrument for the distribution of resources into private hands. As in every country around the world, the Nigerian

state must manage conflicts and mediate tensions in order to be able to perform its other functions. The management of religious conflicts has become one of the major roles of the state since the late 1970s; before that time, it was more concerned with managing ethnic problems, which were partially resolved by the creation of more states. The religious divide has made the state itself more vulnerable, and there have been occasions when it was expected that religious war would grow out of control, leading to anarchy and the disintegration of the country.

The British colonial authorities began the process of separating religion from the state. However, the extent of their failure can be measured by the fact that the secular state that they anticipated has yet to emerge. In contemporary Nigeria, many analysts and the majority of Christians have called for a similar separation. Such a call may appear to be misplaced the real issue is not whether religion and the state will interact, but how the interaction should be managed. As I discussed in the previous chapter, religion and the state were interwoven in precolonial Nigeria, as exemplified by the Sokoto caliphate or the local bodies organized around the rituals of indigenous religions. Any social or ethnic unity in precolonial Nigeria is partially ascribable to religion. Kings with enormous responsibilities justified the exercise of their power through religion, rooted their laws in divine covenants, and strengthened public morality with religious sanctions.

Still today, as I have said, loyalty to religion is often more important than loyalty to the state among Nigerians. Ethnicity and religion are at the very core of the creation of those loyalties that often transcend and contradict the loyalty to the state. Many religious leaders would argue that loyalty to God is more important than loyalty to the state, and that the spiritual realm is more important than the political. Partly in order to prevent conflicts, the state itself has always asserted the right to

control religious activity and to subordinate the power of religious groups to that of the state. In colonial Nigeria, the spread of Christianity to the Islamic north was checked for a while by the colonial administration. In modern Nigeria, too, the state has taken several measures to curb the activities of religious leaders and their organizations.

The Colonial State (1860-1960)

From the very beginning of European interaction with Africa in the fifteenth century, the Nigerian region served as a testing ground for religious evangelization, as a source of slaves, and ultimately as a resource to be gobbled

up by the aggressive imperial expansion of the late nineteenth century. Of all European contacts with Nigeria, the one with the most decisive impact on the evolution of the modern Nigerian state was, of course, the imposition of British colonial rule in the late nineteenth century. By 1860, the British had established a foothold in Lagos, and thereafter began to interfere in the affairs of other areas, most notably the Niger Delta. Gradual inward encroachment was intensified in the last quarter of the century, and by 1903, Nigeria was fully colonized.

The British established an administrative system that combined a new bureaucracy with some holdover elements from indigenous politics. Chiefs, which were held accountable to colonial officers, were to administer their own people. While many suffered cutbacks in independent power, several were upgraded in status and enjoyed more power than they ever had before. As high commissioner of the northern region from 1900 to 1906, Lord Lugard has been credited with inaugurating a system of "indirect rule," which was also extended to the south from 1912 to 1918. Indirect rule seemed to have been well suited to the caliphate and such highly centralized places as Borno. The system of emirates that had been created by dan Fodio's jihad was retained and only slightly modified to suit the colonial administration. The emirs continued to exercise their administrative power largely as they had done previously, although they were now subordinate to British officers. The judicial authority of the emirs was reduced to prevent them from imposing the death penalty. The tax system was changed to put more money in public coffers. In the east, indirect rule proved difficult because the Igbo and other groups did not have a preexisting centralized structure that the British could appropriate. Among these people, the British created a new class of chiefs—the so-called warrant chiefs—but the idea was bitterly resented and finally abandoned in 1929 following widespread riots. Subsequent changes revealed the difficulty of careless experimentations that

ignored the people's history and institutions.

2

The British also laid the foundations of the modern Nigerian economy.³ Based on the export of raw materials, the economy emphasized peasant production of cash crops and mineral extraction. Exports of agricultural materials generated the bulk of the revenues. European and Lebanese firms moved in to control finances and international trade. Indigenous entrepreneurs were marginalized and increasingly pushed to areas that offered little profit to the colonizers.⁴ After World War II, the state became more interventionist; it regulated aspects of production, it collected more taxes, which were diverted to create new industries, and it introduced the notion of economic planning. Other features of the colonial economy that

Nigeria inherited at independence were a lack of class identities based on agriculture or industries, an external trade dominated by foreigners, the existence of only a few large farms based mainly in the north, the expansion of export crops to feed foreign industries, and the agricultural and mineral exploitation of the environment.

While private capital remained insignificant, certain trends were already emerging. Nigerians were acquisitive, involving themselves either in high-profit ventures (e.g., real estate, transportation, and construction) or in handling government resources. Enterprising Nigerians imitated the Europeans and the Lebanese in establishing factories and trading concerns. More importantly, those interested in the accumulation of capital recognized the opportunity offered by the transfer of power in the 1950s. Civil servants, politicians, and businessmen became predators, taking what they could from the state and using it to build capital, invest, and consume. The newer regions expanded the scope of economic activities to benefit their principal business people. For instance, new banks offered improved access to money, diminishing Nigerians' reliance on international finance and on their European and Lebanese partners.

The colonial state was coercive, primarily in order to establish power and attain narrow economic objectives. The complexity of managing a huge, badly integrated territory forced the state to take some steps to minimize the pressure of sectional and religious interests. Gradually it expanded its functions to cover such areas as education and health previously under missionary control. More importantly, the emergence of a federal system in the 1950s ensured regional autonomy, distributed revenues broadly, and divided spheres of authority among the regions and the arms of the federal government. The emergent tripartite regional structure left the state unable to manage interregional relations and unable to stop the continuation of ethnic nationalism.

Colonial Nigeria was nothing more than an artificially constructed agglomeration of diverse ethnicities and other loosely united groups. Built by conquest and subjugation, the state never acquired any enduring legitimacy or trust from the various indigenous groups and nationalities. Older loyalties to kings, gods, and religions continued until the end of colonial rule in 1960. Such loyalties slowed down the development of a strong independent nation and quickly turned the modern state itself into an arena of bitter competition for power and wealth. Almost everywhere, colonial rule fostered the consolidation of ethnic identities; new administrative units based on cultural and linguistic differences have further promoted these identities, encouraging intergroup struggles for privilege and resources.

Colonial Nigeria was governed not as a single administrative unit, but rather as a number of autonomous units, lacking any unifying central institutions until after the World War II.

5 Because it profited from them, the colonial government promoted linguistic and cultural divisions.⁶ In the north, the structure of the old caliphate was preserved, while many indigenous chiefs and kings in the country saw their power enhanced.

During the decolonization process, Nigeria decided on a federal structure for its postindependence political system. By the early 1950s, the federal system had witnessed the emergence of three powerful and autonomous regions—the north, the west, and the east.⁷ The 1954 constitution gave the regional governments power over education, agriculture, local government, health, and public works. They also shared with the central government the power to shape the direction of economic development and higher education. The federal government itself was charged with control over foreign policy, the police and the army, and some capital-consuming aspects of development like communication and transportation.⁸ One major problem with the federal system was that it exacerbated ethnic divisions. One majority group predominated in each region—the Yoruba in the west, the Igbo in the east, and the Hausa-Fulani in the north. While on the federal level, each group and region competed with each other, within each region, the majority ethnic group dominated regional minorities.

Political parties began to form quite early, originating in reform-seeking protest movements.⁹ With the prospect of decolonization, several major parties, notably the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and the Action Group (AG) emerged, each seeking to outrun the other.¹⁰ The

parties revolved around ethnicity, since each one promoted itself as a representative of a major ethnic group. As a result, struggles and competition between individual politicians were interpreted as ethnic or religious feuds. Political aspirants had to mobilize support from their communities and groups while disguising personal objectives as those of the group. Each group struggled to have more access to resources than its rivals. Attempts to build parties on the basis of ideology rather than group identity were rare in both the colonial and the postcolonial eras; Aminu Kano was the most successful exception to this trend.¹¹ Party politics have retained largely the same characteristics since those early days.

The parties borrowed indigenous politics to build a system in which a large body of followers would rely on a few powerful lords for support. Patronage has remained a key element of Nigerian politics. Individuals depend on religion, ethnicity, and other ties to mobilize support and create

power relations. The network expanded further up the political ladder. There were radical and ultranationalistic individuals within some parties, but they failed to grow sufficiently in influence.

Given the role of regionalism in the distribution of power, every political party sought to consolidate and expand by appealing to ethnicity and, in some cases, religion. In the west, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group dominated the scene, drawing support from Western-educated constituents and traditional chiefs, and using Yoruba creation myths to mobilize the masses behind the party. In the east, the NCNC shed its initial national character to become an Igbo-oriented party. In the north, the NPC was controlled by a Hausa-Fulani aristocracy. *Sardauna* Ahmadu Bello, the powerful premier from 1951-1966, went back to the structure of the caliphate to build a united political party; he operated a closed system that prevented outsiders from penetrating into the caliphate's politics. Non-Muslim minorities in central Nigeria had to be appeased or coerced to prevent them from leaving the caliphate and forming alliances with the south.

The Postcolonial State (1960-1980)

The difficulty of managing a complex new state was overwhelming for newly independent Nigerians. Not only did the search for a unified national identity prove difficult, but civil war broke out within a few years of independence. Without a strong central authority to check excessive ethnic nationalism and regional autonomy, the intense regionalism of the 1950s continued during the First Republic (1960-66).

Ethnicity and regionalism manifested themselves both within and among the three regions. Within each region, ethnic minorities complained bitterly of domination by the majority ethnic groups. In northern Nigeria, the non-Muslim people of the central part of the

region rejected domination by the Hausa-Fulani, the northern majority, and many turned to Christianity as a form of protest against Islam. Politically motivated riots arose in 1960 and 1965, spurred by the Tiv's rejection of NPC domination.

12 In the east, minorities in the Delta area complained of Igbo domination. Similar complaints were made in the west. The minority elements played politics in their own way; they pressured the state to break up the three large regions, and their politicians established alliances with various majority groups in furtherance of their goals.

Interregional relations were characterized by profound hostility and uneven development. Minorities and southern ethnic groups feared Hausa-

Fulani domination of the federal government, and every group complained of unequal development. Regionalism and intraclass rivalry contributed significantly to the decision of the eastern region to secede from the federation in 1967. The political parties continued to behave as they had before independence. The north was the largest and poorest region, but its geographic domination of the country gave it more control over the federal government and a greater share of the country's revenues. The western region was the richest thanks to its agricultural exports, its port, and Lagos-based industries. The east had little to rely on other than palm produce, which could not sustain its population; mass migration ensued. The south produced more Western-educated people than the north, and this fact worried the NPC, which feared that southerners would dominate the civil service and the highest ranks of the police and the army. Southerners living in the north were resented for their education, privilege, and perceived arrogance.

For a brief moment during the First Republic, it appeared as if an alliance between the NPC and the NCNC would provide stable leadership at the federal level. The AG became an opposition party, and its attempt to capture power generated internal divisions that destabilized the western region. In 1962 and 1963, attempts to conduct censuses heightened fears across the south that northerners wanted to fix the figures in their favor so as to strengthen their hold on the federal government. As a result, the NPC lost much-needed support from the NCNC. By 1964, new alliances had been formed to contest the federal elections of that year, but the original NPC-NCNC alliance was damaged beyond repair.

As one political and constitutional crisis followed another, Nigeria became more and more disorganized and fragmented. Politicians continued to take freely from the state coffers throughout the political crises, which irked the military. The economy, meanwhile, was in a

deep decline: food prices spiraled out of control, the gross domestic product fell, and Nigeria's trade deficit skyrocketed. The army seized these opportunities to stage Nigeria's first coup in January 1966; politics have been affected for the worse ever since.

After the coup that brought down the First Republic, martial law remained in place until 1979, with four military leaders running the government during these thirteen years: Aguiyi Ironsi (1966), Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975), Murtala Mohammed (1975), and Olusegun Obasanjo (1975-1979). The Second Republic lasted from 1979 until 1983, whereupon the military regained power, led first by Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985) and then by Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993). A brief interim government led by Ernest Shonekan presided until 1994, when Sanni Abacha led another coup.

None of these regimes has been able to work out any of the ethnic and religious conflicts. Their actions have instead contributed to further instability and calls for secession and the abandonment of the federal system. Ironsi came to power against the background of an Igbo-led military coup, and some of his activities were interpreted as an attempt to impose Igbo domination. Gowon, who followed him, came to power as part of a northern-led coup in retaliation for Ironsi's own coup, and Gowon's reign saw a civil war. The rulers of the 1990s, Babangida and Abacha, were powerful and unapologetic representatives of northern interests. To this day, Nigerians are divided by uneven development, religious and ethnic loyalties, and cutthroat competition for control of the federal government and its power over Nigerian revenues.

Military rule has moved the country toward stronger central control. In general, the military has had more success in initiating changes than have civilians, especially with regard to the creation of more states, universities, and local government institutions. These successes have had little to do with the efficiency of the regimes, but rather with the small size of the constituency that they need to satisfy before deciding on any course of action. Since 1966, the federal government has gained more and more power and an increasingly greater share of oil revenues. But centralized control of oil revenues has created pressure for groups to seek power at the highest levels. As a means to strengthen central authority, the three regions of the federation were broken up into twelve states in 1967. In 1979, the federal government introduced a policy of distributing political and civil-service positions fairly among ethnic groups. The military prevented Biafra from seceding after a thirty-month civil war.

Gowon initiated the beginning of the collapse of regional autonomy. The financial health of the regions had come to depend more and more on the federal government because of its control over oil revenues. The formula by which revenues are allocated to the states has become a frequently manipulated political tool that has weakened the states so much that they cannot function without federal support. Because the north contributes little to the federal budget and takes a disproportionate share, southern politicians complain that federal power is unfairly used to promote northern interests. A new power elite of civil servants emerged under Gowon; they governed in alliance with the military to promote their own interests and to enhance federal power over the regions. The bureaucracy became an ally to the military partially because the army wanted to distance itself from the politicians and partially because it lacked the skill and ability to initiate respectable policies of its own. With the strong backing of the military, top

permanent secretaries in the civil service pursued further centralization of power at the expense of the states. The federal government began interfering in virtually every aspect of society, from education to religion. It encroached not only on the power of the state governments, but also on the educational function of religious organizations by sponsoring a policy to take over their primary and secondary schools.

Perhaps the bureaucracy could have stabilized the country and minimized the damage caused by the military regimes; unfortunately, it did not. Many of the centralization policies focused narrowly on the redistribution of power away from the states. Those with influence in the military benefited, and minority groups were temporarily appeased. Those who lost power in the center were placated by reductions in the states' powers. When grumbling increased over the division of power and access to resources, the twelve states were repartitioned into nineteen in 1976. Ever since, further fragmentation of the state has become a tool well understood and often used by a parasitic federal elite intent on cutting itself the largest share of the Nigerian pie.

Minority groups are better served under military regimes, largely because nothing stands in the way of their enlistment and even commission in the army. Gowon was himself a member of a minority group, and many other minorities occupied important positions. The military makes possible far more than does the ballot box. In the 1960s, minorities pushed for fragmentation of the federal system, benefiting from the empowering alliance that sprung up between the military and the civil service. Northern minorities have gained particularly large amounts of power and resources under military rule.

Gowon continued a policy of centralized economic control that had begun in the 1940s. The regulation extended the federal government's

influence to most businesses and made the state the primary mediator of capital. Corruption was on the rise, and large amounts of money were made under suspicious contracts and import-export deals. The first three years of Gowon's administration were devoted to the civil war, which was financed by oil money and not foreign debt. After the war, the state adopted a wage policy that led to astronomical inflation rates. The Gowon regime was eventually brought down because of its disastrous economic programs, massive corruption and mismanagement, unsuccessful attempts at census, and the popular suspicion that the military was concerned only with staying in power.

Gowon's immediate successors attempted to improve on his example in three ways. First, they believed that they could fight corruption by ridding

the civil service of the rotten apples and by promoting morality and a new work ethic. Second, they encouraged nationalism by building a new capital city, creating new states, improving the revenue allocation formula, installing a new pledge of allegiance and national anthem, and centralizing the trade unions. And finally, they aimed to put an end to military rule. Many steps were taken toward this last objective, including the approval of a new constitution that provided for broadly-based political parties and an executive president who was expected to offer strong leadership transcending ethnicity and religion.

Centralization has not produced any magical solutions toward consolidating national sentiment. Quite the contrary is true, in fact; no viable democratic institution has emerged to ensure a more civil power-distribution arrangement. Political authority has grown no stronger, and force is still employed by the government more than consensus-building. Indeed, a case can be made for the claim that authority has remained fragmented precisely because the center lacks legitimacy and credibility. Opposition groups are numerous, and the state lacks the ability to deal with them wisely or to incorporate their views into official policy. Even single-person opposition movements and small groups have succeeded in heavily eroding the federal government's authority. While the civil service has traditionally enjoyed more power under the military, a progressive or powerful bureaucracy has failed to emerge.

With state revenues expanding from oil revenues, the military has remained lazy on economic matters, leaving the country's productive base underdeveloped and encouraging decadence among the power elite. Tax revenues are still reaped in rudimentary fashion, and the government has no reason to be accountable for the allocation of tax money. Those with connections in the federal government freely take money from the treasury, and individuals will seek to gain those connections at any price. People who lose power at the federal level

move to the state governments, creating further pressure to fragment states and expand the political class.

Agriculture has been in a decline since the 1960s, since increasing oil revenues have caused a myopic reduction of emphasis on other productive industries. The state has instead promoted the entrenchment of foreign firms and the development of relations with capitalist nations. While many foreigners and Nigerians have benefited financially from these economics, they are interested only in businesses that yield immediate short-term profits. The need for long-term investments in the Nigerian economy such as using domestic raw materials (e.g., gases from the oil fields) have been largely ignored. While the state has invested heavily in all manner of busi-

nesses, many of them eventually collapsed, and only a few have recorded any significant long-term success. Nigerian entrepreneurs benefited from state policies, from competition and collaboration with foreign investors, and from market opportunity. Whether genuine or corrupt (as far as licensing and foreign trade are concerned), these businesses have developed in scale and scope, from traditional commercial concerns to new kinds of industrial, agricultural, and financial enterprises. Some are no doubt unproductive simply because they are fronts for corrupt activity. But many were productive in what is called the "informal sector," which refers to those markets not under the eye of the government. In general, the partnership between seekers of capital and the state has grown stronger. While this collaboration had the potential to transform the economy for the better, it has had only negative results. Political patronage is more important than business efficiency, and contracts tend to go not to those who can provide better workmanship, but to those with the right connections and most generous bribes.

Ideas for bringing about lasting economic changes were publicized immediately after 1970 as the Second and Third National Plans. The Second Plan set out to give greater emphasis to Nigerian individuals and industries, at the expense of foreigners. It ran aground for a variety of reasons: state enterprises did not succeed, fraud corrupted the nationalist programs as Nigerians colluded secretly with foreigners under the cover of Nigerian-owned fronts, the oil boom of the 1970s encouraged reckless squandering, and genuine local investors and the informal sector were largely ignored. By the end of the decade, the inflation rate had skyrocketed and Nigeria was well on the way to becoming a net debtor for the first time. Excessive and ill-considered government spending generated a bloated civil service and problem in the balance of payments.

The Modern State (1980-1997)

Most of the religious crises that are examined in this book occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. The economic and political changes and events of the period laid the foundations of these crises, adding to the inherited problems and institutions discussed above. Since the 1980s, the political scene has been dominated by petty power struggles among the political elite at both the federal and state levels. But as the country's capability to generate revenues has continued to diminish, power at the federal government has come to be much more prestigious and rewarding. These days, the federal

minister of petroleum has more clout and influence than the governor of any state. Politicians now, as before, are much less interested in using political power to improve their country and liberate the people from poverty than they are in getting rich and having personal power over the beneficiaries of their official patronage. The advent of the modern period also coincided with a decline in natural resources and record unemployment rates in the south. Patronage was the only way to secure any important job or contract.

A Second Republic was formed in 1979. The new political parties were carbon copies of the old ethnic parties, and politics were centered around private accumulation by the politicians.

¹⁴ Five political parties were approved by the military: the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the People's Redemption Party (PRP) and the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP). Except for the PRP, which leaned heavily to the left, ideological differences between the parties were minimal. In elections held in 1979, the NPN won control of seven states (Sokoto, Niger, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Kwara, and Rivers); the UPN took five (Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, and Bendel), the NPP three (Anambra, Imo, and Plateau), the PRP two states (Kano and Kaduna), and GNPP two (Borno and Gongola).

The NPN, which, as the majority party, controlled the federal government, was incapable of providing strong leadership, effective government, or economic development.¹⁵ The NPN was concerned less about good governance and the promotion of democratic institutions than it was interested in exploiting its power for its own economic ends. It failed to develop any long-lasting agenda, and it did not find it necessary to deal with important issues. As long as party bosses were satisfied, not much else mattered. The NPN was a

patronage party par excellence, with its members across the country united by acquisitiveness. Lacking in any development-oriented ideology, and with weak roots even in the north, the NPN survived by distributing political offices and resources to powerful elements in many different regions. But the people were not deceived, and they played along: they saw their so-called representatives as patrons who owed them money and favors for services large and small, and even for their votes.

The NPN was terribly disorganized and it lacked discipline. An overabundance of politically important men, accompanied by their clashing egos, weakened the party's effectiveness. Even President Shagari found it difficult to accomplish anything, and he spent most of his time accommodating the wishes of his party bosses, for whom he found himself creating more and more political offices, at the same time as he was having diffi-

culty creating an effective cabinet. The domestic stature of the presidency was weak, and internationally it was even weaker, failing to attract foreign investment or to command critical attention in world politics.

The politics of the Second Republic were dominated by problems of competition for power, rivalry among the parties, conflict between the NPN-led center and the otherwise aligned states. The twelve states controlled by other parties had no respect for the NPN politicians in the federal government, whom they constantly fought over resource allocation, jurisdiction, and political control. In the states of Kano and Kaduna, elements of class conflict were added to the opposition, as the PRP claimed to represent the interests of the poor, while the NPN stood for the rich. For a brief period in 1979 and 1980, the PRP attempted to abolish some class-based privileges such as access to urban land, seeking also to help out the poor by abolishing cattle taxes. These leftist policies offended the entrenched political interests, and the radical Governor Balarabe Musa of Kaduna state was impeached by an NPN-controlled legislative assembly. While the Nigerian constitution constructed a strong presidency, the opposition parties had little respect for President Shagari. Attempting to counteract the army's influence and to deal with the opposition parties, the NPN-led federal government created an alliance with the police by expanding its forces and adding to its equipment base. In return for this patronage, the police were involved in abusing political opponents and rigging elections. Money that poured in from another oil boom was squandered. Fiscal irresponsibility was rampant as the government took to deficit financing, ignoring accountability, making corrupt and fraudulent loans, and embezzlement, and internal and external debts soared as a result. Unable to manage the growing economic crisis and its external debts, the NPN alienated the masses and paved the way for the return of military rule.

By the 1983 general elections, there was already widespread frustration among the people. Massive election fraud, a corrupt judiciary, and a partisan Federal Electoral Commission compounded the frustration. The NPN not only controlled the federal government but added five states to its sphere of influence, all through fraud. Only the victorious NPN candidates were satisfied with the conduct of the elections. Many businessmen and military officers that had supported the party began to have doubts. A crop of young aspiring northern politicians, who had been denied duly deserved power in the heavily skewed process, began to agitate for change. And the always opportunistic Nigerian military could be trusted to step in at a time of such public distrust and frustration.

The first military regime of Buhari was a great disappointment, not

only because it was unable to cure the ills of society, but because it created what most Nigerians most dreaded: a dictatorship. The regime received public support initially, but it was soon discovered that the military leaders and their key civilian supporters were biased towards the NPN. It seemed that a wing of the NPN, dissatisfied with a gradual loss of northern control, unbridled corruption, and economic mismanagement had gotten rid of Shagari but retained his policies. When the regime announced its mission and policies, it may as well have been a paraphrase of the 1980 NPN manifesto.

16 Top-level NPN officials from the overthrown regime were allowed to escape the country unharmed. Investigations of corrupt NPN politicians were poorly conducted, focusing mostly on the enemies of the NPN. The Buhari regime's economic goal was to restore domestic discipline and obtain international credit, and to this end, the military government embarked upon a policy of austerity, but it was unable to stop the rich from flaunting their wealth.¹⁷ Deep cuts were made in many areas, and a wage freeze was imposed. The government suspended political activities, harassed the public with its War Against Indiscipline, intimidated the press, coerced student and labor organizations, and enacted many harshly punitive laws to deal with crime. The public quickly grew dissatisfied with the government and organized against it.

By 1985, many were already demanding a return to civil rule because of the dissatisfaction with the military. The Christian Association of Nigeria, now stronger than before, made some public, critical statements. Catholic bishops decried authoritarianism.¹⁸ When the government tried to extend its repression to the military and political classes, it ran into the trouble that was to bring it down. The regime was overthrown in 1985 by one of its most highly placed members,

General Babangida, who had spent years maneuvering himself into a position from which he could take over the country. The change was originally welcomed by the public because the Buhari regime was authoritarian, controlled by a pro-northern cabal, and unable to raise the common person's standard of living. Little did the public know at the time that Buhari was more committed to his people than his power-hungry successor would turn out to be.

To stabilize his regime from the outset, Babangida began by making popular moveshe promised a broad-based consultancy (although this turned out to consist of thirty senior army officers), a free press, and a greater respect for the judiciary. He originally sought well-qualified people for ministerial appointments. In 1985 and 1986, popular opinion was loudly in his favor, and even such hostile newspapers as the *Nigerian Tribune* began to sing his praises. The government embarked upon programs of eco-

conomic reform and transition to civil rule. Launched with fanfare and optimism, both ended in colossal failures.

Babangida took on more power than any of his predecessors, began using the National Security Organization for surveillance of his enemies, and in 1989 he created a National Guard for his own personal protection. He tried hard to maintain his grip on power, but public disenchantment and protest weakened him and led to attempted coups in 1985 and 1990. The Babangida state became more coercive, unleashing its draconian forces on every social class, interest group, and many individuals. Universities were closed for months, organizations outlawed, and anti-military organizations persecuted.

The Babangida regime saw massive economic decline. A Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was introduced in 1986 to satisfy the demands of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The SAP was an economic package that included privatization, government regulation, and a currency devaluation. Certain industries were deregulated in the hope that more foreign investments would be attracted. The crisis of Nigeria's dependent economy was heightened during this regime. External debt increased; almost half of the country's income went to debt service; the pressure of the international community was weak, conservative and incoherent; foreign capital and interest dominated the oil industry; and the country's leverage and bargaining power in international financial houses was weakened, occasionally to the point of complete impotence. Social services began to decline, families were ruined, the rate of unemployment increased, and the cost of living spiraled upward.

While the aim of Babangida's policies was to improve upon the development of capitalism, the Babangida regime's politics stepped on the toes of its own policies. The state became notorious for its

inefficiency and inability to check inflation and high unemployment rate. None of the measures to attract foreign investments was successful. It became more lucrative to engage in clandestine hard-currency exchange than in production.

The much-anticipated capitalist culture failed to develop. Most private wealth in Nigeria was made under dubious circumstances. Many Nigerians were able to make money quickly, but it is usually lost just as quickly to poor investments. The only way to grow rich was through state patronage. Consequently, today's business elite struggles to identify with power in a variety of ways: by joining political parties, befriending military chieftains, and humoring the people in power. Either to protect wealth acquired corruptly, or to prevent their rivals from using power to destroy them, the entrepreneur class continues to strengthen its connections with the protective powers in

the government. Acquisitive, greedy, and ambitious, they also rely on a large network of people they can control, manipulate, and exploit. But the rich have not developed an upper-class culture that can be described as bourgeois. Without entrenched property ownership and a working system of inheritance, and without any rational way to make and reinvest money in productive activities, no coherent Nigerian bourgeoisie can develop to respond to changes in market forces or engage in serious competition. For one thing, loyalties to religion and ethnicity remain stronger than capitalist loyalties. But loyalties rooted in capitalism do not generate any political crises; rather, it has been the manipulation of religious and ethnic loyalties to gain state power that has been more significant. If the business class had been united by capitalism, perhaps the nature of political struggle would have taken a different form.

While competition for power has become endemic since the 1950s, its intensity was heightened in the 1980s and 1990s precisely because of the need to gain access to easy money made available by the corrupt distribution of oil profits. Under Babangida, a number of developments occurred that undermined the federal government in such a way that religion and ethnicity generated problems. Babangida failed woefully to protect his administration from the calculations and ambitions of interest groups whose main interests were money and power. He ran the state like an emperor, conferring largesse willy-nilly upon individuals, rewarding some states and ignoring some others. He was the chief political patron of the country, and he tried to turn everyone else into a client. Accountability was impossible, since he continuously had his hands in the state coffers as if the public treasury were his own. Every politically important Nigerian began to notice these facts, and used their political positions as platforms from which to lobby for favor. What Babangida failed to realize was that as this process repeated itself, his hangers-on began to encroach on his

power, and he was slowly losing control. Indecisive, unpredictable, and erratic, Babangida sent signals that everyone who knew how to play the game of flattery and corruption was welcome to try his hand. Many officers in the army wanted power, and the turnover of governors and ministers soared as Babangida tried to distribute lucrative positions to as many people as possible. A mediocre transition program became another source of his undoing; in his last two years, political parties and elected governors began to gain control over the states. Although he denied the elected National Assembly the power to legislate over many important issues, the states gradually began a process of reasserting themselves, a fact that came out in sharp relief in 1993 when the states turned against him.

The Babangida era witnessed the emergence of a more active civil society. There was nothing new in a Nigerian regime under attack. Indeed, ever since the colonial period, the country has often witnessed such radical moments when struggles for human rights, liberty, democracy, and press freedom were especially intense. What was new in Babangida's case was that the civil society actually managed to contribute a great deal to bringing about the end of his regime. Economic deterioration, increasing political crisis, and religious troubles promoted such a strong culture of disengagement from the state that a seemingly motley crowd of students, workers, and scholars turned against the regime with ferocity. The military was effectively challenged; what saved it was not its efficiency or discipline, but the sheer violence with which it responded to the challenge. In a span of just a few weeks in 1993, the Babangida regime killed more than two hundred protesters in Lagos. Students, labor unions, and the urban poor were united in their condemnation of the regime. The government fought back through harsh decrees and the incarceration of opponents.

As in the 1960s, threats of secession became more frequent, minority problems more difficult to solve, and religious conflicts more endemic. Many Christians thought of Babangida as an Antichrist. No ruler in modern Nigerian history had acquired a more negative popular image. He earned this through a leadership style that thrived on duplicity, deceit, and dishonesty. Moreover, he was an autocrat and a cunning schemer skilled at minimizing opposition to his regime.

Many of the political problems came into sharper focus with the abortion of the transition to the Third Republic. The process began with much enthusiasm, but doubts set in as Babangida changed the rules of the game more and more often. The usual self-serving attitude of the politicians took over, and votes were bought and identities exploited. The role of religion intensified as some election campaigns

came to be constructed along Muslim-Christian lines.

As poor as the preparation for the Third Republic was, Nigeria managed to hold a presidential election on June 12, 1993. When it was apparent that Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a southern Yoruba business tycoon, was about to win, Babangida halted the polling mid-course and nullified the election. Inside and outside of Nigeria, this decision was vehemently criticized, and protests followed, especially in the southwest, where violence accompanied the protests. The military lost respectability collectively and individually in the heady days of 1993, the uniform was a symbol of disgrace. The weakness of the ruling class was exposed as each person and group suggested self-serving solutions to the political crisis. Alliances and

coalitions collapsed as fast as they were formed. Sectional and ethnic interests flourished. The crisis consumed Babangida, who was finally forced to leave his power. Perhaps calculating his resurgence, he transferred control not to Abiola but to a weak Interim Government.

Babangida's downfall did not bring an end to the country's political woes. Instead, instability became more pronounced, as the Interim Government of Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba businessman, failed to get a grip on its power during its brief three months of existence. General Abacha, who took power in 1994, was not a popular choice: he had participated in three previous coups and worked closely with Babangida; he was a multimillionaire, and generally regarded by the public and his colleagues as less than intelligent. As he struggled to hold on to his power while preventing Chief Abiola from claiming his duly won presidency, he harassed the pro-democracy forces and made a mockery of judicial independence. The economy continued to slide: investors were scared away, oil production diminished temporarily for some ten weeks in July and August of 1994, corruption went unchecked, the naira was further devalued, and the country became a subject of international ridicule. By 1995, Abacha had shown himself as the country's most brutal leader to date; he jailed or killed his opponents, flagrantly violated human rights, and disregarded domestic and international opinion. The country became a rogue state, condemned by nearly every other country on earth for Abacha's political excesses and the irrationality of his military rulers. General Abacha's regime has set in motion yet another program of transition to democratic rule, but it remains unclear whether he will ever allow it to come to pass, or even if he does, whether democracy will finally stick.

Conclusion

Nigeria's religious problems have occurred against the background of political instability and economic decline. A highly corrupt military

has provided leadership for most of the period under discussion, instigating backward, inefficient, and wasteful policies, and implementing an economic agenda that brings nothing but poverty to the majority of the population. Patterns of accumulation have been largely unproductive; trafficking in currency was more lucrative than manufacturing while the development of capitalism desired by successive Nigerian governments has been slow. Money circulates, to be sure, but not much wealth is produced. Easy oil money has promoted a culture of materialism, which disturbs a number of

religious leaders and groups. The interests of the masses are irrelevant in the political calculations of their leaders, who want only to enrich themselves. The distributive concerns of the political class not only overshadow all other issues, but are so transparent as to discredit the entire process. Leaders are scorned and resented. Those with power are pressured to give away part of their stolen money to the members of their constituencies. Political aspirants kowtow to false patrons, not because they are unaware, but because this is the most effective way to get a sliver of the Nigerian pie. Politics is unstable, as coup follows countercoup. Every segment of the Nigerian leadership has been discredited at some time or other, and those that have not been actually discredited are certainly discreditable. The civil service, which passes unchanged from one regime to the next, cannot provide stability or good government; it is too bloated, corrupt, and inept.

The 1980s and 1990s have been trying decades for the poor. Unemployment, inflation, and scarcity have all characterized this period. In addition, environmental degradation has plagued the peasantry in every part of the country.

19 Current economic conditions in the country include poverty, inequality, and exploitation of the poor. The deep irony in this is that the same period has witnessed the creation of the largest number of millionaires, people rich in both Nigerian money and hard currency. The wealthy flaunt it more than ever before, driving million-naira cars, building houses that look more like temples, taking European vacations, throwing extravagant parties with live bands singing their praises, and loudly careless condemnation of the poor.

Corruption is institutionalized and has become perhaps the largest issue in the country's political discourse, second only to federalism. The scale of corruption has been increasing since 1960. Throughout

the sixties, politicians and soldiers made at least some claim to honesty, but they have not even felt the need to pretend to be honest in the eighties and nineties. In 1975, at the peak of the oil boom, corruption sparked a coup. Just two years later, the head of state was admitting that the country was a place "where people employ[ed] all foul means and devices including connection at high places to obtain what may not be due to them."²⁰ The corruption technique of contract inflation has been improved upon in many ways: contracts are often awarded for nothing; customs officers and police openly demand bribes; and billions of naira have disappeared without a trace from government offices. Since the 1980s, the government has resorted to such propaganda as the War Against Indiscipline, installing draconian anti-protest measures in 1984.²¹

Nigeria has yet to collapse as a territorial reality, and there are still

discussions on a domestic future. And while the economy continues to disintegrate, it continues to be kept away from the brink of collapse by enormous oil revenues.

The nature of religious conflict and interaction has been shaped by many of the aforementioned issues. As I have said already, more and more people are driven to religion by economic and social conditions. When the state is unable to provide medical services, for instance, the people turn to priests and pastors for spiritual curatives. When the state is unable to provide jobs, religious organizations can meet at least some material needs.

Furthermore, both Christians and Muslims continue to seek alternative solutions and ideas for dealing with a chaotic state and a corrupt environment. Religious discourse is now dominated by issues of political instability, economic decay, social injustice, inequality, and corruption. Since the mid-1970s, the Christian community has been asking itself what it can do to bring about change, alleviate poverty, and end injustice. The answers have drawn it into the political realm. A tiny radical element within Christianity subscribes to the concept of liberation theology, a philosophy that enjoins its practitioners to relate their religion to their milieu, and to play a leading role in bringing about social and political change. Liberation theology stresses religion's relevance beyond the church, into the streets and down the corridors of power. Muslims, too, have reacted in a variety of ways: some seek the application of Islamic principles to improve morality and the conduct of politics; others think that the installation of an Islamic state would ensure good governance.

To some extent, however, religion itself contributes to injustice and impoverishment: it cannot be said that no religious leader has condoned bad leadership, preached patience in the face of mismanagement, or kept quiet when they ought to have been critical.

There can be no doubt, for instance, that corrupt leadership in northern Nigeria has legitimized itself through Islam, or that Christian preachers have diverted the attention of their congregations away from social and political reality into the spiritual world, thereby indirectly enabling the continued governance of incompetent or harmful leaders. Some religious leaders have commercialized their faith, seeing it as a business by which they can make money off the poor. The fraudulent preacher is just a corrupt politician with different strategies. And of course, the conflicts among various religious groups prevent the growth of a strong national sentiment that could serve to produce a force capable of moving the country in a positive direction.

3

Religion and the State: A Theocracy in a Muslim World?

We will be betraying the cause of Islam and the integrity of the Muslim umma if we fail to discharge our obligations as Muslims. These obligations entail, among other things, the establishment of Islam as a complete polity and the dismantling of all Western influences as they affect us.

1

From the point of view of many Islamic groups, leaders, and scholars, Nigeria ought to be an Islamic state with a prominent position in the Muslim world. The epigraph to this chapter, written by Ibrahim Sulaiman, an influential Muslim scholar, has become a rallying cry among Muslims preachers, and scholars. They believe their goals can be achieved through imposition of al-Shari'a and associating Nigeria with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). It is important to note that this movement is not about the mass conversion of all Nigerians to Islam, as many Christians fear. Rather it seeks to establish moral and political control through religious law and the power to establish connection with an external organization that will offer crucial support in time of need. Should this come to pass, the government will find no difficulty in dealing with Christians, since the minority Christian community will be officially marginalized and stripped of political power and religious freedom.

In this chapter, I shall examine in detail how the desire to shape and define Nigeria as a religious state has created overwhelming pressure and crisis. As aggressive claims for various institutionalizations of religion push

the country from one crisis to another, the debate over whether Nigeria ought to be secular or theocratic has come to the foreground; closely related to this is issue of al-Shari'a. And, of course, there are countless other issues of intergroup relations within the state itself: distribution of resources, foreign policy initiatives, and the definition and enforcement of morality are all volatile issues that divide Nigeria along religious lines.

2

Islamic Pressure and Its Antecedents

Pressure for the imposition of al-Shari'a began in the late 1970s and experienced a revival in the late 1980s; calls for OIC membership came up in 1990s. The Islamic elite's desire to extend al-Shari'a to all of Nigeria and to be active in the OIC has not been realized, but the severe pressure has taken its toll on the state. These issues have pushed the country to the brink of a religious war and sharpened the religious divide beyond the point of healing. In pushing the issues of al-Shari'a and the OIC, the Muslim constituency undertook a bold gamble. Had it succeeded, the character of the state would have been significantly and permanently altered. Religion served a political end in this gamble, becoming a mobilization strategy for controlling the federal government, settling regional conflicts in favor of a hoped-for northern hegemony, and a destabilization of southern political competitors. The calls for al-Shari'a and OIC membership were extreme manifestations of the deep fissure in Nigerian politics as well as evidence of a lack of a pan-Nigerian political class focused on ideological rather than religious or ethnic differences. The religious divide threatens the secular basis of the country and the continued survival of the federation.

The pressure to impose Islam on the state began long before al-Shari'a became an issue. I have already referred to the *Sardauna's* strategy of converting non-Muslims to create a unified Islamic North. In the early 1970s, the Gowon regime was stigmatized by many northern Muslims. Alhaji Gumi inflamed this criticism by vociferously pointing to the corruption of the Gowon government and many of its anti-Islamic policies.

The al-Shari'a issue is confusing to many Nigerians, largely because Christians fear that it is the last step toward the Islamization of the country. But to the Muslim scholars and leaders, al-Shari'a is a body of law that will help to attain an ideal Islamic state. As learned Muslims understand it, this ideal state is the continuation of the state created by the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam. I shall briefly summarize the history of the desire for this ideal state in order better to understand the nature of demands being

made in modern Nigeria. Without such a refined understanding, it is difficult to comprehend accurately the ideals of the Muslims and the anger of the Christians.

The origins of today's call for an ideal Islamic state are not to be found in modern Nigeria, but in the early history of Islam itself. This complicated history must be summarized here drawing directly and deliberately from propaganda distributed in Nigeria

3precisely because it is relevant to what happens in Nigeria. The history of the issue goes back to the seventh century, when Islam emerged and the Prophet Muhammad created the first caliphate. Myths and facts about this have become inextricably entangled over the intervening centuries to develop a modern understanding of the Prophet Muhammad's government. The Prophet Muhammad was against materialism, criticizing the Arabian state, its rulers, and its merchants. Even before he founded Islam, he was given to great reflections on society and life. Around A.D. 610, he received the divine revelation that he was to become God's messenger in reforming the world. For twelve years thereafter, he received many more revelations that, written down, became the bulk of the Holy Qur'an, the central text of Islam. Other revelations were added until the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632, and over the next twenty years, his followers completed the holy book.

The Prophet Muhammad's revelations are central to Islam, and their contents describe what Muslims mean when they speak of an ideal state. The words of the Qur'an come from God, not from human beings or even the Prophet Muhammad himself. God had spoken before he spoke to the Prophet Muhammad the Qur'an makes reference to previous prophets like Moses, David, and Jesus but the Qur'anic revelations were different. The revelations to the Prophet Muhammad

were to be the last from God. The Prophet Muhammad was the last of the prophets. The Qur'an is not just a critique of human society, but a constitution for regulating it. It affirms the supremacy of Allah above all else, and it commands humans to surrender themselves to Him.

Following early opposition in Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad fled in July of 622 to Medina, a flight known as the *hijra*. At Medina, the first umma (Islamic community) was created under an Islamic constitution. The Prophet Muhammad became the political head of the *umma*, creating a system that combined religious and political power in one figure. This system was based on the Prophet's teaching and the pre-*hijra* revelations mentioned above. Members of the *umma* were required to recite the *shahada*, the confession of faith: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet." The *umma* was bound to demonstrate its religious commitment

by performing *salat* (five-times-a-day prayer), *saum* (fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan), *zakat* (almsgiving), and the *hajj*. The activities of the *umma* became what are still called the five pillars of Islam. The constitution of the *umma* was al-Shari'a, the divinely appointed law revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The actual code of al-Shari'a emerged slowly, and was codified and refined only after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

The *umma* had one religious obligation as yet unmentioned: jihad. Since that early time, the jihad has come to be conceived narrowly as religious warfare. But to that first *umma*, it meant more essentially, it entailed striving in the path of Allah. This path had different manifestations. The jihad of the heart was the purification of the soul from evil desires and thoughts. The jihad of the tongue obliged people to command others to do what was right. The jihad of the hand enforced obedience to the law. Best known of all forms of the jihad, the jihad of the sword entailed the use of force to convert "pagans", defend the faith, and to bring about reforms to Islam when necessary. In order to successfully carry out large-scale jihad warfare, the majority of the *umma* had to be convinced of its necessity, and be prepared to die for the cause.

The early *umma* embarked immediately upon the jihad of the sword. Their ideology divided the world into two portions: dar al-Islam, the Islamic world, and dar al-harb, the "second world" of unbelievers. The *umma* was obliged to extend the faith into the dar al-harb Mecca and Medina for that first *ummaby* any means necessary. They waged a war against Mecca, and after a very successful battle in 630, Mecca became the capital of Islam, and the ka'ba (the "holy place") located in Mecca was designated as the destination for pilgrimage. The Prophet himself made the hajj to Mecca in 632, the year of his death, and it immediately became a tradition.

By the time of his death, the community had expanded beyond the *umma* at Medina to include people in western and central Arabia and communities south of the peninsula. The post-Muhammad period to the time of Caliph Ali (656-661) was the golden age of Islam, according to most Muslim scholars. This was a time of expansion, strict observance of al-Shari'a, respect for the Prophet, and commitment to the jihad. The early caliphs had been personal associates of the Prophet Muhammad.

The establishment of Islam in Arabia had provoked conflict with Christians and Jews. The Prophet Muhammad had demanded that the Jews of Medina recognize him as a religious leader and prophet deserving of the same treatment as Moses and Isaiah. This recognition was not forthcoming and the Qur'an received no acceptance as a divine text. The Jews argued that the Prophet Muhammad was out to exterminate them, pointing to

clashes that led to Jewish deaths and the expulsion of the Jews from Medina. Islamic scholars, however, claim that the *umma* did not harbor any such murderous feelings for the Jews, pointing to the respect the Prophet Muhammad had demonstrated for their beliefs and to the distinction the *umma* made between "pagans" on the one hand and the "people of the book" (Christians and Jews) on the other.

Enduring consequences resulted from these early conflicts; many are still current. Jews and Christians still have tense relationship with Muslims, and doctrinal differences periodically exacerbate the tension. While Jews and Christians are not regarded as "pagans" by Muslims, and while they are protected to some extent in Islamic territories, Islamic law does not give these *dhimmis* equal rights and privileges. In return for their protected status, *dhimmis* were expected to recognize Muslim authority and pay a poll tax. More than just a revenue-enhancement device, this tax was meant as a payment for exemption from military conscription and for being spared the jihad of the sword.

All these stories from early history are continually reenacted in modern Nigeria. To many devout Muslims, the salvation of Nigeria depends on its drawing not on Western political models, but from the model of the early *umma* and its unification of political authority with moral and religious authority. Most of what Muslim preachers and leaders propose to reform Nigeria comes from their understanding of the early *umma*. Among such demands are calls for a religious leadership in Nigerian government, the exclusion of women from political power, a jihad for reforms to Islam, large-scale conversion of "pagans" and Christians, a Qur'anic political system, enforced observation of the five pillars of Islam by Muslims, official opposition to the state of Israel, official support of the Palestinian Authority and other Islamic countries, commitment to Islam as a religion, and limited compromises with Christianity and other religions. All of

these demands and the nostalgia for the early *umma* are part of the demand for al-Shari'a in modern Nigeria.

For Nigeria's Christians, the *umma* the Muslims desire to create is a dangerous body politic that may exterminate them or make them second-class *dhimmis*. Many of the arguments for and against an Islamic state are less rational than theological. The authoritative sources to which scholarly combatants refer are not part of the literature of institutionalized political science, but the Hadith, the Qur'an, and the Bible.

When Nigerian Muslims speak of al-Shari'a, they refer to a system of Islamic laws that evolved out of their religion. Islamic literature describes it as a code of law and behavior revealed by Allah as that which is meet and

right for humans to do. The primary sources of these laws are (a) the revelations recorded in the Qur'an, (b) the *sunna*, or documented practices of the Prophet as recorded in the Qur'an and Hadith, and (c) interpretations of the holy texts made by Muslim legal scholars in consultation with the *ijma* (the official position of the 'ulama) and *qiya* (Islamic caselaw). The *ijma* and *qiya* allow al-Shari'a to be interpreted in changing times and situations without changing the underlying Qur'anic laws, which number around five hundred.

4 Al-Shari'a is an eternal code of laws ordained by God; it cannot be modified simply to suit social change. Interpretations are based on Islamic principles, and they must embody respect for God and for His people. Good Muslims must follow al-Shari'a, as it is a path laid by Allah Himself. A text widely used in Nigerian secondary schools makes the standard line quite clear:

Since the Shari'ah is Allah's way and Allah's law, as revealed in the Qur'an and demonstrated by the Prophet, . . . it is the duty of every Muslim to follow the Shari'ah in his own behavior and in his dealings and relationships with other people. . . . The Shari'ah is the law for all Muslims to follow, not man-made laws that change with the fashions of the time.⁵

Opposition to a Christian State

The imposition of British rule provided the starting point for opposition to a secular state. The colonial state itself was bureaucratic and lacked many of the features of a democracy. To Muslims, however, it was not a religious state, although the sultans, emirs, and qadis retained some of their old functions. Having accepted the inevitability of living in a modern colonial state, Muslims began to respond in a variety of ways in relating to this alien state. They rejected many Western values, which they perceived as synonymous with Christianity. Both Christianity and Western values are criticized

for making Nigeria excessively materialist, undignified, and morally decadent. Nigerian Muslims complain that the West is immoral, animalistic, and uncultured, encouraging rape, church-sanctioned same-sex marriages, and emphasis of the material over the spiritual.⁶ Muslims prefer the Middle East to the West as a cultural reference point. Orthodox Islamic movements that emerged during the colonial period advocated the rejection of Western dress, language, and values.⁷

The rejection of Western values entailed rejection of the colonial state. Indeed, the colonial strengthening of Muslim identity was a step toward a

preparatory purification of Islam leading up to a fight against the colonial state. Small opposition movements emerged, committed to attack "bastions of evil" such as indigenous religions and Christianity. Using the rhetoric of protest, these movements urged Muslims not to compromise their religion by cooperating with Christians in modern politics, by identifying with unbelievers, or by prostrating to kings and chiefs. Colonial laws were conceived as Christian laws. A few small movements organized their communities under Islamic law and harshly criticized the encroaching power of the state and Christian education. One such small group was the Lanase movement in Ibadan, a group of neo-puritanical Muslims critical of Western education, party politics, indigenous Yoruba religion, and Christianity.

8 In the 1940s and 1950s, radical Muslim reformers came out against the colonial state, equating it with the kingdom of the devil. They were looking forward to the departure of the British so they could take over the state under the auspices of a jihad.

Meanwhile, the contemporary crisis in the Middle East compounded Nigerian tensions. Christians and Westerners were blamed for the establishment of the state of Israel, the occupation of Jerusalem (the third holiest city of Islam after Mecca and Medina), and the Palestinian diaspora. Nigerian Muslims identify with the concerns of the Arab countries and are critical of Israel and the Vatican.

The fight against a secular state was delayed until after 1975, as the country was preparing for the advent of the Second Republic. Ever since, secularism has been the most sustained issue in Muslim-Christian relations. The constitution of the First Republic specified that Nigeria was to remain a secular state. The Muslims fought in the 1970s to exclude such a clause from the Second Republic's constitution. The process by which this document was created was of

three phases: an initial drafting by forty-nine people, discussions by a large constitutional convention, and ratification by the military government.

In the preamble to the article concerning the state and its fundamental objectives, the drafting committee advised that the country be described as follows: "Nigeria is one indivisible sovereign Republic, secular, democratic, and social."⁹ The committee felt that this would be a fairly unproblematic, acceptable formulation. No one could disagree with the determination that Nigeria would be a republic. Even local kings and chiefs were happy to accept republicanism provided they were given sufficient prestige and wealth in the new system. Democracy was a similarly unproblematic idea, built in to the concept of a civil government. The most important term in the phrase, social, was intended to make the state

accountable to its citizens; the politicians were happy because they already included the term in their manifestos, and were perfectly comfortable ignoring the responsibilities attached to it. What actually worried the committee was the term secular, which was subsequently expurgated because of the uproar it caused.

The lawyers and Christians on the Constitution Drafting Committee felt secular implied state neutrality in religious affairs; the secular state would not be describable as Islamic or religious. To the Christians, while a secular state was the status quo inherited from the British, the term had to be put unequivocally in the constitution in order to prevent the Islamic elite from making Nigeria an Islamic state. A number of Muslims wanted the term cut out for the same reason. They quickly attacked the "socialists" and "communists" of the CDC, accusing them of atheism. These Muslims were sincerely concerned that a state without Allah and religion was no state at all because people, as servants of God, can only rule by the laws of God.

Many Muslims interpreted the infamous secular to mean Christian, as many argued in sermons.

10 Others argued a secular state was one where the peoples of a country draw moral inspirations not from God, but from themselves. And to still others, a secular state was an irreligious state, which true Muslims must not accept. Many of these latter Muslims fell back on English-language dictionaries, which define secular as "worldly or material; not religious or spiritual;" and as a God-centered state, Nigeria could not possibly be so described.¹¹ They pointed at the invocation of God's name in the preamble to the constitution and in the pledge of allegiance. The Muslim Students Society (MSS) attributed monstrous social problems to secularism, concluding that it "had removed all restraints on human behavior and hell is let loose because man feels accountable to none but to his fellow men, whom

he can evade easily and successfully."¹²

Those Muslims tolerant enough to accept the Christian's definition of secular were still unconvinced that the word should be included in the constitution, arguing that the ambiguity of its meaning could be exploited by a non-Muslim leader to justify the persecution of Muslims and the denial of their constitutional right to freedom of worship. Christians needed to be reminded that Islam does not distinguish between state and religion, and that Muslims would not live in a "pagan" state. A few intellectuals among the Muslims went as far as to argue that because Muslims were in the majority, then even Western democratic ideals would lead to the creation of an Islamic state, since that was ostensibly what the plurality of Nigerians desired.

Liberal-minded Muslims were willing to compromise by replacing secular with multireligious. The government of a multireligious state would encourage freedom of worship, promote the interests of different religions, and avoid favoring any one religion. But no such compromise was made, and the issue of definition has still not been resolved. The actual solution adopted by the government was to call Nigeria a religious country without an official religion. This language found its way into the 1989 constitution for the ill-fated Third Republic. Paragraph II of that document states that the federal and state governments "shall not adopt any religion as State Religion," and the controversial secular was nowhere to be found.

13

Who's Afraid of dar al-Islam? Demands for al-Shari'a

The demand for al-Shari'a by many Muslims, which was closely related to the rejection of the secular state, was actually the main ideological issue on which were anchored most other matters. The battle over al-Shari'a has been more intense than that over secularism, it laid the way for the violence of the 1980s.

Like the debate over the secular state, the controversy over al-Shari'a entered the public arena while the new constitution was being drafted in the 1970s. Prior to that time, al-Shari'a had been written into the northern regional constitution since 1956, and had remained a non-issue for twenty years. But the troubles that arose in 1978 have remained a thorn in the side of many. In that year, the Constitution Drafting Committee provided for the establishment of courts of al-Shari'a in the drafts it provided to the constitutional convention and the military government. The key provisions were as follows:

- i. There shall be a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal which shall be an

intermediate court of Appeal between the States' Sharia Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

ii. The Court shall be composed of the Grand Mufti and such a number of Muftis (not less than three) as the National Assembly may prescribe.

iii. In each state of the federation that so desires, there shall be a Sharia Court of Appeal to be established by the Constitution of the State.¹⁴

By the time the Constituent Assembly reached deliberations on these provisions, al-Shari'a had become a major point of controversy in the country, fueled by Islamic leaders and northern politicians, whose motivations were both sincere and political.

Most Christians believed that al-Shari'a had no application outside of the Islamic north. Even the largely Muslim Yoruba were accustomed to civil law. Some believe that the al-Shari'a movement is not purely driven by a commitment to Islamic law, but also by a desire to extend Islam's political sphere over the entire country.

15 In churches and prayer meetings, Christians were urged to fast and pray for a halt to the impending Islamization of the country. Christians regarded the draft constitution's special provision for a court of al-Shari'a as a demonstration of governmental bias for Islam, arguing that if Muslims had their own Islamic courts, there ought to also be *orisa* courts for adherents to traditional religion and Christian courts for Nigerian Christians. Christians saw nothing wrong with the separation of church and state, and were concerned that Muslims would abuse any special exceptions to that principle (in which Muslims do not believe in the first place).

Christian leaders warned that the imposition of al-Shari'a would lead to civil war, which had happened recently in Sudan. Stories were told of a Sudanese Catholic priest who was tried and sentenced to flogging and detention by a court of al-Shari'a for possession of wine, which although it was intended for liturgical use, was nonetheless a forbidden alcoholic beverage.¹⁶ Members of the Christian intelligentsia saw al-Shari'a as a backward legal system unfit for the modern age. Its punishments, they said, were draconian: robbers, for instance, were sentenced to severed limbs at best and execution at worst. Feminists argued that al-Shari'a took away women's inalienable political rights, denying them the opportunity to hold positions of political or legal leadership.¹⁷

Others advanced the simpler position that al-Shari'a could not rightly be applied to non-Muslims. Christians of this bent painted a scenario

for Nigeria under al-Shari'a in which only Muslims would be allowed to lead the country, major political offices would go to Muslims, non-Muslim would be officially inferior to Muslims, intermarriage would be forbidden, conversion to Islam would be enforced, and the army would be no more and no less than an arm of the Islamic jihad.¹⁸ Only a handful of Christian writers called for a compromise under which the country should allow both instantiations of al-Shari'a and provisions for Christian ecclesiastical courts.¹⁹

Many Muslims vehemently disagreed with Christians over the issue, advancing a variety of contrary positions. They stuck with the rhetoric of democracy: the Nigerian people, since they are mostly Muslim in number, should be governed by Islamic laws. Indeed, Muslims are bound by faith to order their lives by al-Shari'a "if there is anything which is characteristic of and fundamental to Islam and Muslims, it is al-Shari'a."²⁰ In a truly federal system, where power belongs to the states and to the popular major-

ity, their views ought to prevail. These Muslims asserted that ninety-four percent of cases among the northern populations were tried in the courts of al-Shari'a, leaving just six percent to the secular courts.

Other Muslims argued that because existing laws smacked of colonialism, they needed to be rejected in favor of an Islamic legal system if the shackles of imperialism were to be thrown off. They felt that for courts to ignore Islamic law was the worst kind of injustice.

21 The only way to demonstrate a commitment to the emergence of a postcolonial legal system, they said, was to begin with the spread of al-Shari'a. After all, al-Shari'a was nothing new to Nigeria, and the British colonialists had actively suppressed it.²² Mahdi Adamu, the influential vice-chancellor of Usmanu dan Fodio University in Sokoto, Nigeria's "Islamic capital," reminded a Muslim audience at an important 1983 conference on Islamic law in 1983 that al-Shari'a was an indigenous Nigerian institution:

One of the most far-reaching consequences of Nigeria's colonial experience was the imposition, by our British colonisers, of the English Common Law which has now largely supplanted our time-honoured judicial principles and processes, most especially in regard to the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) to which the majority of Nigerians, being Muslims, subscribe. The contempt and antagonism with which the English Common Law holds the Shari'ah has meant that Islamic legal practice was, and still is, relegated and restricted to civil matters and other personal issues such as marriage and inheritance, while English Law claims monopoly over nearly all other forms of Law-Constitutional, Criminal, Commercial, *etc.* Thus, despite the fact that the majority of Nigerians are Muslims, Common Law, rather than Shari'ah, serves as the main judicial code and procedure. To this extent, Law in Nigeria is largely divorced from its socio-cultural and religious contexts. What an injustice!²³

There was, moreover, a moral dimension to the demand for al-Shari'a.

Some Islamic religious leaders claimed that Nigeria was morally bankrupt. Since no one could disagree with the need for change, and because al-Shari'a would bring such change about, it seemed a foregone conclusion. Al-Shari'a would not only correct societal lapses, it would also improve the lives of millions because al-Shari'a promotes social justice. Islamic leaders advocating change put primary emphasis on the moral impact of al-Shari'a. In the phrase of one Kano mallam, Nigeria is a land of *al-fasad*, a Qur'anic term for corruption. "Every politician tells lies, all army officers are rogues, people cannot train their mouths and minds, women have no self control."²⁴ For the mallam, Nigeria had become a den of iniquity. Other preachers added sexual promiscuity and materialism to their list of complaints.²⁵ The

solution, as usual, was identified as al-Shari'a. Another writer argued that man-made law would be futile in dealing with such a degenerate society as Nigeria.

26 A. R. Gibb described al-Shari'a as the ultimate divine guidance and command; S. Nasr added that it embodies the Divine Will, which, if accepted, would assure the continued success and happiness of human-kind. R. Doi concluded that no legal system that derives its sustenance solely from the human mind can cure society of the chronic evils of criminality and exploitation.²⁷ To all these Muslim scholars, a country as morally deficient as Nigeria has no alternative but al-Shari'a, and materialist Western laws are irrelevant to a society in need of ridding itself of decadence.²⁸

Conservative Muslims argued from a theological standpoint. Citing Qur'an (especially the verses 5:47-48 and 5:50), they contended that Allah will not condone Muslims' toleration of any law other than al-Shari'a. Those rulers who have made Muslims submit to secular laws have had to answer to God. Ishaq Kunle Sanni, a committed Yoruba Muslim believer in al-Shari'a and a notable author of Islamic literature, resorted to private curses and public polemics to bring his point home. In a popular book, he wrote:

May the Almighty Allah save us from His wrath because of the Godlessness and irreligiosity of the so-called muslim rulers. Our consolation lies in the prognostication of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be On Him) that all these unislamic Governments under the hegemonial suzerainty of tyrannical ruler and despotic playboys would insha Allah crumble. Alhamdullilahi there are signs that they are already being submerged by the wave of Islamic awareness sweeping through the whole world. Their days are numbered by the Grace of Allah. We must continue to struggle. We should not rest until all the vestiges of Kufr is annihilated assiduously from our system and the Shari'ah established in all

its divine ramifications. The journey is tortuous. The road is infested with thorns, yet it is a goal from which we should never waver or become despondent as a result of the simpletonic castigation of the ignoramus or the hypocrites.²⁹

Muslims were told to ignore the secular state and to practice al-Shari'a in their homes and communities. Many separatists Islamic leaders saw no need to negotiate with Christians or the government on the use of al-Shari'a, believing that Muslims are obligated by divine commandment to live their lives according to al-Shari'a, and secular politics were not even to be considered.³⁰ A number of Islamic teachers referred to passages in the Qur'an³¹ to buttress their arguments that al-Shari'a embodied the laws of the Qur'an and the injunctions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims were irritated by those who condemned al-Shari'a as primitive. They felt that no law was more effective in curbing moral lapses and anomie than al-Shari'a. What is more, Western guillotines and electric chairs were no more harsh than the penalties imposed by al-Shari'a. The democratic and humane scope of al-Shari'a comprehensively covered all aspects of public and private life: marriage, polygamy, divorce, adoption, contracts, loans, crime, judicial administration, diplomacy, foreign policy, human rights, equity, and political philosophy. Like Western laws, al-Shari'a was capable of resolving any issue from international relations to domestic finance and banking. It was rich and extensible enough to apply to any era, something that could not be said of Roman law. "It searches out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things, acts, and motives are known."

32 With respect to women's issues, the Islamic line has always been that while women are excluded from public office, women have all the rights and privileges to which they are entitled.³³ They deny the accusations of Christians and Muslim feminists that women are exploited and treated unjustly.³⁴

Al-Shari'a has been advertised as universal, as applicable to every nation on earth.³⁵ Its secular and spiritual components can fit into almost any society, but particularly to Muslims. Al-Shari'a is elastic enough to be used as a system of national government regardless of race, ethnicity, or geography.³⁶ Those who fear al-Shari'a need only be won over by *at-taqwa* devotion to Allah, service, merit, and discipline. The proponents of al-Shari'a say that while its punishments may seem harsh, it cannot be called barbaric because its provisions are intended to cleanse criminals from society.³⁷ Critics of al-Shari'a are generally dismissed as ignorant of its true content or too caught up in

the Western worldview to consider alternatives.

As to the charges of corruption leveled at Muslim jurists, the party line is that corruption is located in the jurists themselves, not in al-Shari'a. These men can and should be punished, and the system itself can and should be reformed. Finally, the growth of Islam and Islamic laws, long impeded by colonial rule, would be renewed and invigorated with the adoption of al-Shari'a. As far as many of the Muslim intelligentsia are concerned, contact with the West has been most detrimental to their religion, having destroyed Islamic culture and law,³⁸ and having limited al-Shari'a to the private and personal domains. Colonial and postcolonial laws took away from the criminal jurisdiction of al-Shari'a, as part of an attempt to subjugate Muslims to Western secular laws and their resultant exploitation. Muslims saw collusion and conspiracy among Western countries:

In order to serve their imperial interests, they first attacked al-Shariah because they knew that if its all-round implementation was prevented then Muslims would soon be crippled, disunited and degraded. Throughout the period of their influence over the Muslim world they did their best to see that al-Shariah was replaced by their own law, culture and ideology. With at least a century of constant and systematic efforts, they were able to create love in the hearts of a large number of educated Muslims for their culture, permissive society and secularism.

39

A pan-Nigerian minority view emerged, not associated specifically with the Muslim community, holding that the al-Shari'a debate was an artificial smokescreen directed by Western imperialists who sought to divide the country, making it susceptible to domestic and international exploitation. This position, of course, was tendered by the left; radicals among student organizations, trade unions, and religious organizations supported this view in widely circulated tracts like "The Shari'a Court and You" and "Nigeria Today."⁴⁰ These documents warned their readers further that the problems of poverty would not be solved by any Islamic or religious law.

A heightened state of economic tension in the months preceding the al-Shari'a debate exacerbated the situation. In 1977, as part of an attempt to cut educational costs, the government made sweeping reforms that reduced the privileges of students in educational institutions. Ensuing protests led to widespread tensions and to strained relations between the universities and the government. Trade unions became involved in many of the protests, complaining of a budgetary crisis, rising food prices, and impending massive foreign debt. These changes set a politically charged stage for the al-Shari'a debate, and convinced a number of Nigerians that a nonsecular solution to the crisis was necessary.

At the same time, independent political tensions were arising, as large numbers of politicians sought to join political parties and achieve positions of power and privilege. Young men in the north fought for a return to civil rule in order to acquire power for themselves. Many of these younger politicians thought that they could derive benefit from the al-Shari'a debate by identifying with a Muslim constituency in the north and presenting themselves as champions of Islam and politics in a new era. But minority elements within the north, activated by the *Sardauna's* conversion campaign of the 1960s, wasted no time in fighting back. Politicians and Christian leaders in central Nigeria joined the southerners in advocating the rejection of al-Shari'a. They saw the demand for Islamic law as a personal attack. Wilson Sabiya, a prominent Christian who became one of the heroes of the anti-Shari'a controversy in central Nigeria, claimed that Muslims

were trying to make the people of central Nigeria slaves of the Hausa-Fulani who would "be forced to pay tribute for the protection, application, promotion and enforcement of Islam." Sabiya threatened that should al-Shari'a be adopted, war would be inevitable as the country was "split into religious camps."

41 To the southern Christian politicians, attacks on al-Shari'a enabled two simultaneous political moves: the prevention of northern Islamic political solidarity and the formation of a common front among southerners. In the long run, though, they failed to accomplish either of these goals.

The political aspects of the al-Shari'a debate were not lost on most of the participants. Even the 'ulama who demanded al-Shari'a on the basis of their own moral and religious convictions were worried by the politics to which it gave rise. To cite one 'ulama:

Christian and Muslim youth were merely self-seekers, and were not in any way serving the interest of their religions, but were merely using religious sentiment to get cheap popularity to enhance their political positions, since they had no previous political status. . . . Some Muslims, including elders, boycotted the Assembly to protest over the issue, not because of the relevance of the controversy but because of their genuine fear of being accused by their younger colleagues of being less devoted to their religion.⁴²

What eventually resolved the al-Shari'a debate was not the ideological confrontations played out in the media, but pragmatic politics and popular coercion. Members of the Constituent Assembly did not want the military to dissolve the organization, which provided its members with the opportunity to live and network at government expense. In April 1978, the Constituent Assembly determined that a politically mixed subcommittee headed by Chief Simeon Adebbo, a renowned

diplomat and career bureaucrat, ought to handle the al-Shari'a issue.⁴³ The subcommittee's mandate was phrased as simply as possible: "their assignment is to devise a way whereby anybody aggrieved by the judgement of an appeal court in the state dealing with Islamic law will be able to appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal."⁴⁴ The Adebo subcommittee submitted its recommendation the very next day:

Whenever there was a Sharia case on appeal, the Federal Court of Appeal would be constituted by three judges learned in Islamic law. They are not called a Panel. They are not called a division. They are called a Federal Court of Appeal and for that purpose, they are the Federal Court of Appeal.⁴⁵

For three days, the Assembly debated the merits and terminology of courts of al-Shari'a.⁴⁶ The drama peaked on 10 April 1978, when Alhaji Kam

Salem, former chief of the Nigerian police and a representative from Monguno-Ngala in Borno state, announced that all Muslim assemblymen had split with the Constituent Assembly. The rebels, hoping that the resulting paralysis of the Assembly would reopen the issue, boasted that they represented half the population of the country and that their view should therefore prevail.

47 But they had miscalculated: the remainder of the Assembly approved the Adebo proposal, and it was promptly incorporated into the constitution. Henceforth, all appeals from the system of courts of al-Shari'a would be settled in accordance with al-Shari'a at the Federal Court of Appeal, which, while not an orthodox court of al-Shari'a, would take principles of Islamic law into consideration in its decisions. Section 240 of the Constitution allowed any state that so desired to establish a state-level Shari'a Court of Appeal, whose decisions would be reviewed by the Federal Court of Appeal.

The Muslim walkout further intensified the controversy, focused national attention sharply on the religious divide during April and May 1978. The rebellious assembly members returned to their constituencies to stir up popular support. Pro-Shari'a protests were organized in many northern cities.⁴⁸ The military was forced to intervene, warning politicians and assembly members not to drag the nation into another civil war. The Muslim Assembly members eventually returned, and the Assembly held its last meeting on June 5, 1978, without mentioning al-Shari'a.

The intense controversy over al-Shari'a in the late 1970s touched on a number of important issues in the country's politics and religion. It exposed the willingness of aspiring politicians to use al-Shari'a as a political tool. Islam united many right-wing northern politicians who sought alliances in the south as well. Some northern politicians saw it

also as a way to prevent the south from gaining control of the federal government, calculating that a united north would be powerful enough to resist southern pressures. Breaking the spirit of pro-Shari'a groups became politically important to southern politicians.

Important religious issues came out during the debate as well. Christians interpreted the demand for al-Shari'a as desire to impose Islam on the Nigerian state. Muslims felt it was a matter of religious freedom, that they had an inalienable right to be governed by al-Shari'a. By demanding that al-Shari'a be introduced in all states, Muslims were accused by secularists of ignoring the federal system, which allowed states to decide on their own governments, but not on that of the nation. Many Muslims framed the debate as being between Western ideas and indigenous Islamic ones. To these Muslims, Western laws would eventually collapse, just like the

Westminster system of the First Republic, bringing the entire Nigerian state to collapse on account of the inability of Western values to deal with corruption. The choice, for these Muslims, was not between capitalism or socialism, but between Western and Islamic ideology. Muslims who link al-Shari'a with morality accuse the West of encouraging corruption. "Being that the West is, to a large extent, morally degenerate," one such Muslim writer concluded:

it is a matter of course for the spill-over of her moral crisis to find its way into Nigeria. Hence the Nigerian social fabric is engulfed in indiscipline since the era of colonialism. . . . It seems the process of cultural bastardisation will run its full cycle because the preoccupation to transform Nigeria into a modern and industrial economy will mean a more intensive cultural flirtation with the industrialised and advanced West. . . . Refusal and denial of divine guidance by the modern man is also a product of western civilization. The mental vision dictated by the age of science and technology, for which the West is the self-appointed leader, recognises primacy of materialism. Materialism aspires to create congenial condition for the unmitigated growth and satisfaction of the animal instincts and promptings in man without a corresponding condition for the awareness that somewhere, sometime and someday man will be held responsible and brought before a Supreme Being to account for his deeds.

49

Muslims link Christianity with the materialistic West. Christians disagree, arguing that they are just as opposed to consumerism and materialism as are Muslims.⁵⁰

The al-Shari'a debate strengthened the Muslim intelligentsia's conviction in the value of Islamic law, especially as it applied to modern Nigeria. Legal books were printed and circulated, and Nigerian universities were urged to establish schools of Islamic law, or at least to integrate Islamic principles into their law curricula "in

order to restore the dignity of al-Shari'a."⁵¹ Southern Muslims were urged to fight for their rights. Islamic laws were presented to them as superior, more practical, and better suited to the country than Western laws.⁵² Some writers went so far as to suggest an Islamic ideology for organizing and governing the country as an alternative to Western capitalist ideology.⁵³ For Muslims, hardly any aspect of the country's political problems is beyond the help of Islam. Power is held in trust for God, and the leadership example of the Prophet Muhammad is more than sufficient to guide any modern-day ruler.⁵⁴

Arguments were made that the unhealthy economy could be improved under an Islamic economic system. The Western model of economy was

said to be based on *riba* (usury), which thrives on selfishness, greed, and malevolence. Islamic economics are based on the principle that "all the natural resources and power contained in the universe belong solely to God Almighty, but that God has opened all the resources and powers to man for him to exploit for his own benefit with the proviso that man should always be mindful of the principle of accountability in all that he does with those resources and powers."

55 Details of an Islamic economic system are hard to come by, but its proponents generalize about accountability, individual responsibility, and spiritual upliftment rather than materialism, discouraging traffic in unlawful commodities, corruption, and exploitation.⁵⁶

The Second al-Shari'a Debate

While the Second Republic was inaugurated under that compromise constitution, which was eventually ratified, the issue over al-Shari'a did not die down, and religious controversy continued to generate serious crisis through the 1980s. It was alleged, in fact, that General Buhari's military regime would have imposed al-Shari'a on all Nigeria had it not been for the coup that swept it from power.⁵⁷ In the 1980s, attempts by religious leaders and religious organizations to impose or prevent al-Shari'a continued; the northern 'ulama were united in their demands for al-Shari'a.

Demand among the Yoruba had intensified thanks to the efforts of students and Islamic organizations. The campaign was heavily funded by wealthy Muslims with interests in the north, and it demanded the extension of al-Shari'a to the southern states. Among the Yoruba, where Islam and Christianity had interacted more or less peacefully since the nineteenth century, the pro-Shari'a groups found themselves attacked by both Christians and fellow-Muslims. They argued that

Islam had established a sufficiently firm footing among the Yoruba, even affecting the language, to warrant the imposition of Islamic law. One university-based Muslim scholar erroneously and famously said that justice in precolonial Yorubaland had been dispensed according to al-Shari'a.⁵⁸ Yoruba Muslims were urged by pro-Shari'a factions to reject common law because it was influenced by Christianity, and customary laws because they ignored the basic rights of Muslims. Muslim scholars argued that, for example, customary laws in divorce cases forced Muslims, who would usually have to reconcile under al-Shari'a, to separate. Customary inheritance laws also contravened principles of al-Shari'a.

Politicians and religious leaders laid in wait for another public opportunity to launch the al-Shari'a issue. Such an opportunity arose in 1988,

when a revision of the constitution led a number of Muslims to believe that al-Shari'a would be incorporated into the document. Those who had most loudly lamented its absence in the previous Constitution had spent the intervening years preaching to an ever-growing audience.

59 Many blamed the Muslims' 1978 failure on the Christians and the West for championing the cause of imperialism and the spread of materialist civilization. As soon as the new draft constitution was presented for deliberations before the Constituent Assembly on 11 May 1988, the al-Shari'a issue came up right away. Christian members of the Assembly called for the deletion of all references to al-Shari'a, and Muslim members objected, now demanding that al-Shari'a be applied to the entire country. The al-Shari'a issue was debated throughout the year, and it boiled over in November. What transpired then in the Assembly has been reported by Justice A. N. Aniagolu, the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly.

Justice Aniagolu said that no issue was "viewed with as much awe, or was as acrimonious, or was as potentially dangerous, or was as emotionally charged, or was pursued with as much relentless fervor, or had the much capacity of destroying Nigeria"⁶⁰ as did the al-Shari'a question. Seeking to avoid a repeat of the 1978 crisis through tact and diplomacy, Aniagolu consulted with an advisory committee and with many members of the Assembly. He formed a Committee of Elders to advise him on al-Shari'a and to find a way out of the impasse. The Committee of Elders initially comprised 18 members representing a spectrum of religious views. Five Elders were to liaise with Muslim Assembly members, and five with Assembly Christians, particularly those who served in the subcommittee on al-Shari'a. The Elders were expected to contribute actively to debates and to aggressively seek

solutions. Their proposal was that al-Shari'a should remain in the Constitution to satisfy the Muslims, but that its jurisdiction would be limited exclusively to Muslims.

Aniagolu summarized the fears of Christians as the Committee of Elders understood them thus:

They [the Elders] realised that the only reason why Christians were demanding that Sharia be expunged from the Constitution, was because of the use to which the Muslims were putting the Sharia Courts in oppressing the Christians particularly in northern Nigeria. Therefore, the Christians wanted the Sharia expunged from the Constitutions as being unconstitutional, since section 10 of the 1979 Constitution prohibited the adoption of any religion by the state and since the Sharia Court was purely a religious court. If the Sharia Court could be limited, therefore, in its ambit of operation, by limitation in its jurisdictional powers and geographical limits, leaving only

Muslims to be affected thereby, the Christians would reasonably have no quarrel with its existence.

The Elders believed that limiting the jurisdiction of al-Shari'a to Muslims would satisfy the Christians, especially Northern Christians, who complained of unreasonable control by courts of al-Shari'a. Moreover, the power of the Sharia Court of Appeal was to be limited to personal law, covering matters of marriage and divorce, family relationships, guardianship of infants, and gifts and inheritance.

61

When the Committee of Elders made its report to the Assembly, it was received critically. Many members of the Assembly questioned the Elders' mandate:

Some said that the members of the Committee of Elders were elitist, and arrogated to themselves exclusive possession of wisdom which they arrogantly were seeking to impose upon the Assembly. Others said the Elders Committee was unrepresentative of all the states of the federation and before anybody would give consideration to the report, the committee must be expanded to include representatives of all the states of the federation.⁶²

Aniagolu decided to expand the Committee of Elders to 36 members, with as much geographic and religious diversity as possible. At the first meeting of the expanded committee on 19 October 1988, the chairman began by asking each person to summarize the position of his constituency. Some states (Akwa Ibom and Benue among them) rejected the Sharia Court of Appeal, asking that it be removed from the constitution; some (Anambra, Lagos, and Kaduna among them) requested that the issue be discussed by the entire Assembly and not by the Committee of Elders; two states, Bauchi and Ondo, wanted to retain the language of the 1979 Constitution; Kano wanted to see a

Sharia Court of Appeal established in every state of the federation with a Muslim community; Sokoto wanted a complete constitutional system of *Sharia* Courts, right up to the Supreme Court; Bendel promised to continue dialogue, but warned that its members in the Assembly were worried by perceived Muslim arrogance; Cross River, Kwara, Niger, Plateau, and Gongola expressed no opinion; Imo state opined that al-Shari'a was not a constitutional issue; Ogun wanted a dialogue between Christians and Muslims to resolve the issue; and Oyo reminded everyone that as Nigeria was a federation, al-Shari'a should only be installed in the states that wanted it, and that non-Muslims should be federally protected. While some contributors toed the line of their faith, others held Nigerian unity paramount. The meeting failed to resolve any issues.

Aniagolu recalls that as he was returning home after the 19 October meeting, he wondered "whether with the complete absence of any constructive suggestion by some of the people at that meeting the committee could still be called the Chairman's Advisory Committee or should rather be called the Constituent Assembly 'Disintegration Committee.'"

63 Follow-up meetings were more acrimonious, and on 26 October 1988, they passed a measure to appoint a small committee to identify the members' fears and to recommend ways of dealing with them.⁶⁴

A subcommittee of the Committee of Elders, comprising six members, deliberated over al-Shari'a on three occasions in October and November 1988. Most of what they had to say was repetitive, but they did produce a widely read document that stated quite clearly the concerns of both Muslims and Christians. Christians felt it would be unreasonable for them either to accept any Sharia Court in the Constitution or to grant concessions that would contradict their own disbelief in state religion. The Christian delegates expressed their fears thus:

Christians are afraid of "progressive Islamization" of Nigeria and they gave the following factors as bases for the fear:

- (a) Changes from Supreme Military Council to Armed Forces Ruling Council, allegedly motivated by Muslim distaste of the application of the term "Supreme" to anything other than God-Allah.
- (b) Nigeria's surreptitious entry into Organization of Islamic Conference.
- (c) Nigeria's approaches to the Islamic Development Bank confirming her membership of the OIC and the persistence in that membership in spite of public outcry and the impression given that Nigeria had withdrawn membership.

(d) Decree 26 of 1986: The promulgation of decree 26 of 1986 which removed "personal" from the phrase "Islamic Personal Law" thus generalizing and extending the provision of the Islamic Law in the Constitution; Christians are concerned about the intendment of the act.

(e) Grand Khadi at Abuja without Customary Court of Appeal

(f) The face of Abuja: i. Abuja looks like a Muslim city with the Muslim architectural designs, especially the bus stops designed like mosques. ii. The hospital in Abuja has no mortuary and nowhere can coffins be bought in Abuja. This denies non-Muslims the facilities for preserving and burying their dead on the same day of death.

(g) Utterances of Muslim leaders: the environment created by these factors of Islamization has given a prominent Muslim leader the courage to say that political leadership of Nigeria is a monopoly of the Muslims, that Muslims cannot voluntarily submit to leadership by a Christian.

(h) the effect on the Muslims to:

- i. resist the declaration of Nigeria as a secular state where secularism is clearly understood as different from Godlessness.
- ii. extend the provision of the Sharia Court beyond the 1979 limit which is the origin of the current controversy.

65

Muslims, too, had their grievances. According to their representatives, Muslims did not intend to "de-Christianize" Nigeria, but they felt that Christians had to appreciate the concessions that had already been made to them. "Christians should at least, and without any cost to themselves, make a concession on the Sharia Court issue to enable the Muslims to live by the dictates of their religion, as provided for in the fundamental rights of the same constitution." Like the Christians, the Muslims enumerated their main concerns:

- (a) The Common Law and much of Nigeria's legal system derived from England is Christian inspired, the House of Lords has clearly declared Britain a Christian State, thus the laws and other practices in Britain are not only consistent with Christian tenets but are indeed inspired by them.
- (b) The Gregorian Calendar which is used in Nigeria is Christian. Muslim calendar is ignored so much that most non-Muslims do not know that it exists.
- (c) The Salute of the Military Officers with sword or gun, resembles the signs of the cross and the cross is Christian. Yet Muslim soldiers have to observe the practice.
- (d) The signs at hospitals and other medical institutions denote the Christian symbol of the cross.
- (e) Nigeria maintains diplomatic relations with the Vatican, a Christian theocratic state.
- (f) The observance of Sundays and Saturdays as work free days is to respect the Christian and Jewish religions respectively.

(g) Many formal official clothing of judges, academics etc resemble those worn by Christian clergy and choristers.⁶⁶

The subcommittee came up with a number of options. One was to keep the provisions of the 1979 Constitution. The other was to make changes in one of two ways:

(a) One Court System Sharia to the Supreme Court. One court system should be established in Nigeria but cases based on any source of law religious, statute, Common Law, association contracts, our customs and traditions, etc., can be handled by the "one court system" which must develop or acquire competence to handle cases arising from the multiplicity of sources

of law, Islamic personal law. Cases can be heard from the lowest courts to the Supreme Court and when it is so required, the Muslim will be tried by his peers at all levels of the court system. Thus, we do not need to establish multiple court systems to meet the multiplicity of our sources of law.

(b) Special Courts to Respect Nigeria's Federal Nature. In recognition of the federal nature of Nigeria and its consequent diversities and considering our experiences in constitution making, especially, 1963 and 1979, each state shall have the right to set up a Special Superior Court of Record. The State Assembly, shall have power to make laws to govern such a Special Court. The nomenclature of the court may be derived from the dominant local condition. And the operation of such a court shall respect the fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens. In particular, where the court has any religious aspect, its application shall be limited to citizens who practise the religion represented by the court.

67

Thinking that the availability of complete information would make for productive discussion in the Assembly, the Chairman made all such opinion papers available to all members on 18 November and decided to table the issue until the information could be digested. He was immediately shocked by what happened.

[All] hell was let loose in Abuja. Emergency meetings were called by Muslim groups, followed by meetings of the Christians. Threats were being issued. Rumour had it that the Muslims had decided that the next Monday's sitting would not hold and that the work of the Assembly would be disrupted even to the point of physical combat. Messages were coming to me, over the weekend, in threatening drones. Accusations, all imaginary, rent the Abuja air.

The Chairman was the subject of wild rumors, with some extremists saying that he was committed to a constitution containing no reference to al-Shari'a, and that he should consequently be killed. Christian members of the committee, anticipating trouble, prepared by wearing

clothes that would not impede physical combat, sending their families away from the city, and even shopping for machetes, daggers, and arrows at Abuja markets. A constant stream of inflammatory sentiment flowed in the media. Aniagolu, determined to stop the anger in its tracks, requested additional security, instructing plainclothes policemen to "grab any member who became unruly and throw him out."⁶⁸

On the Monday morning, 21 November 1988, Aniagolu went to the Assembly building, believing calm would prevail. Shortly before nine o'clock that morning, Ambassador Kingibe (also an Assemblyman), came to Aniagolu's office to warn him of tension in the chamber. After waiting for almost two

hours, Aniagolu decided to call the Assembly to order for the day's business. "As usual we proceeded to the Assembly led by the Sergeant-at-Arms, in a single file. This time, however, it was like a mournful march, with everybody's face stern and full of anxiety. . . . The Assembly rose in discordant cadence with some of the die-hards refusing to stand." Points of order flooded Chairman Aniagolu almost too quickly to be believed. He immediately lost all control over the Assembly: "It was like a bizarre cacophony of untamed and unruly school children, held over, in detention, as punishment for their unruly behavior in class, and agitating that they may be left to go home and have their lunch."

69 He adjourned the Assembly until the following morning. The members of the Assembly did not take the adjournment as a holiday, and strategized continually until the next day's session, which was similarly unproductive enough for Aniagolu to adjourn the body for a week.

During that week, al-Shari'a was constantly on the lips of religious leaders and all over the media. The *New Nigerian*, which represented northern interests, organized an unbalanced debate that had more people speaking for al-Shari'a than against it. Some influential northerners called on the military to enforce the constitutional inclusion of al-Shari'a. Even Justice Aniagolu made a political move, spending the week-long adjournment in Lagos to meet with the president and vice-president. He spoke as one who had lost control, concluding that since the Assembly was in no position to compromise, the government ought to decide on its own course of action.⁷⁰ Aniagolu had no idea what the government would do.

Seeing that the Assembly was degenerating into chaos and the country was following rapidly, the military stepped in on 28 November 1988.

Giving no more than a few hours' notice, the government sent Vice Admiral and Chief of General Staff Augustus Aikhomu, second in command of Nigeria, to address the Assembly. Aikhomu made it clear that the government was displeased with their acrimony, ordering that the Assembly cease discussions on al-Shari'a, and promising that the military government would decide the issue based on national consensus.⁷¹

Reactions to the government's intervention were mixed. Most members of the Assembly were happy to see an end to the internecine debate. A few believed that the intervention was unjustified, and that the Assembly would have reached a better decision given time. Aniagolu, on the other hand, called the intervention a godsend, saying he did not see how the Assembly could have made progress and avoided discredit.

The military eventually decided to limit the application of al-Shari'a to the states that specifically requested it. The power of the Sharia Court of Appeal was circumscribed:

The Sharia Court of Appeal of a State shall, in addition to such other jurisdiction as may be conferred upon it by the law of the state, exercise such appellate and supervisory jurisdiction in civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic Law where all the parties are Muslims.

To assuage the fear of the Christians, the federal government said that it had not tampered with the principles of the previous Constitution, and it clarified the new language:

The Court is given jurisdiction only in matters relating to the moslem's personal life. Only states which wish to have such courts need establish them. Any state that does not require it will not have such a court.

These courts will hear cases involving only moslems. Unlike in the 1979 Constitution, any person who is not a moslem will not have anything to do with the Sharia Court.

72

Aniagolu was satisfied with the decision of the military because, to him, it was based on compromise:

Both sides of the Sharia divide have won. The Christians have won the victory that henceforth, the Sharia laws in Nigeria would remain for only Muslims and no non-Muslim would ever again be made subject to their tenets. The Muslims, on the other hand, have won their fight that the Sharia should not be excluded from the Constitution.⁷³

But Aniagolu's optimism was misplaced. The al-Shari'a debate was as politically manipulated as it was religiously motivated. The political role of religion remains important, providing limitless opportunities for mobilizing people behind political causes. The al-Shari'a controversy remains far from dead. At the conclusion of a major Islamic conference in 1989, the Islam in Africa Organization (IAO) was founded, with its headquarters in Nigeria. One of the most important resolutions of the IAO was unambiguous in its rhetoric: "We

are ready to go any length to get Sharia established in this country whether we are alive or dead."⁷⁴ This goal is still being pursued.

Nigeria and the Organization of the Islamic Conference(OIC)

The Organization of the Islamic Conference was established in 1965 by mostly Arab countries, with the aim of eventually including all Islamic states and any others that wished to join. Its first major meeting, the Summit

of Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Islamic Countries, was held in Rabat in 1969. The creation of the OIC was part of a larger movement to create a strong Islamic forum for discussing development and fighting the West. Between 1969 and 1971, organizational meetings defined the structure and functions of the OIC, and representatives of thirty Islamic states officially approved the OIC charter in Jeddah in February and March 1972.

In the preambles to its charter, the OIC resolves to "preserve Islamic spiritual, ethical, social and economic values, which will remain one of the important factors of achieving progress for mankind . . . [and to] consolidate the bonds of the prevailing brotherly and spiritual friendship among their people."

75 The OIC's main purposes are as follows: (a) to promote Islamic solidarity among member states; (b) to consolidate economic, social, cultural, scientific and other kinds of cooperation and consultation among its members; (c) to strive for the elimination of racial segregation, discrimination, and colonialism in all its forms; (d) to coordinate efforts for the safeguarding of holy places, and to support the Palestinian struggle for their rights and the liberation of their territory; (e) to strengthen the struggle of all Muslims with a view to safeguarding their dignity, independence, and national rights; and (f) to create a suitable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and mutual understanding among member states and other countries.

The OIC has three bodies: the Conference of Kings and Heads of States and Governments; the Conference of Foreign Ministers; and the General Secretariat.⁷⁶ In addition, the OIC has established more than a dozen agencies and organs to implement its objectives.⁷⁷ Judging from the activities of these organs, the OIC intends to cater to most of the developmental needs of its members by operating agencies similar

to those of the World Bank and the United Nations, minimizing the dependence of Islamic countries on the West.

Nigeria was invited to attend the 1969 meeting, but it sent only a delegation of observers led by Abubakar Gumi. The administration of General Yakubu Gowon, then battling a civil war, told Morocco that the Gumi delegation represented not the state of Nigeria but its Muslim population.⁷⁸ In spite of pressure by a number of powerful Muslims in Nigeria and elsewhere, the Nigerian government refused throughout the seventies and early eighties to join the OIC, which kept the OIC from becoming a policy issue, except among the Muslims involved in private lobbying for Nigerian membership.

Then out of the blue, the national French news agency broke the

news that Nigeria had been secretly admitted as the forty-sixth member of the OIC in January 1986. The news spread rapidly in Nigeria that Babangida, like a thief in the night, had handed his country to the OIC. He had not consulted his Christian ministers, the External Affairs Ministry, his highest-ranking executive advisory body, or the Armed Forces Ruling Council. Commodore Ebie Ukiwe, the number-two man in the government, made a public statement that he had been unaware of the decision, a statement that Christians believed led directly to his removal a few weeks later.

79 The decision had been made in private by only Babangida and a select group of people whose identity has never been revealed.

Nigeria had been invited as usual in December 1985 to attend the Morocco meeting of the OIC from 6-10 January 1986. The External Affairs Ministry routinely advised its ambassador to Morocco to observe the meeting. Unbeknownst to the Ministry, however, Babangida had assembled a clique of prominent Muslims (comprising Rilwanu Lukman, petroleum minister; Abubakar Alhaji, a permanent secretary in the Ministry of National Planning; Abdulkadir Ahmed, governor of the Central Bank; Ibrahim Dasuki, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs; and Abubakar Gumi) to travel to Fez for the meeting, not to observe but rather ask for admission. The OIC enthusiastically waived all formalities and granted Nigeria full membership immediately.

Why did Babangida push the country to full membership when all his predecessors had been hesitant to do so? Perhaps the only reasonable answer is that he wanted to win over the powerful Muslim constituency for his own interests. He was not regarded as a good Muslim by many members of this constituency, and joining the OIC would surely better their image of him. He also anticipated that

material gain for Nigeria would follow, as it had for thirteen other countries in Western and Central Africa, once they had access to the monetary resources of the Islamic Development Fund and to a broad range of technical-assistance programs. Although the exact extent of these rewards was not known, officials suspected that it would be enough to free them from Western aid from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They had failed to consider, however, the fact that other members of the OIC were also indebted to Western-based international financial institutions.

In every way, Nigeria's entry into the OIC turned out to be a costly miscalculation. The resulting controversy polarized the country along the religious divide more than had any other issue in Nigeria's history. Unlike the other major religious-political issues, al-Shari'a and secularity, which had been brewing for decades, the OIC crisis erupted overnight, and as it

happened, the Nigerian population did not know about the OIC crisis until it was already well underway.

When news of the OIC alignment reached Christian leaders, they were enraged and immediately called for the government to withdraw. Muslims reacted, thrilled at belonging to the OIC and demanding that Nigeria remain a member. A major crisis ensued. In the first few days, the government thought that Christians would calm down in due course. This did not happen, since Christians were terrified of Nigeria becoming an Islamic country as a consequence; the secular Nigerian media also interpreted the OIC crisis as a religious issue. Others thought of it as a policy issue, wondering why the government would fail to consult its people before making such a major decision.

Christians immediately mobilized against the OIC. Their manifold objections were widely publicized in the newspapers and were the subjects of sermons and church publications throughout 1986. Churches issued statements and called for special prayers, rallies, and fasts aimed at fighting the OIC. Christians thought of the OIC as an Islamic organization, conceived by Muslims to achieve objectives that would promote the cause of Islam; citing its charter and activities, they concluded that the OIC was nothing but an organization of Muslims united in the defense of Islam. The situation provided an opportunity for the Christian leadership to launch a full-scale attack against the government and Nigeria's Islamic elite.

A number of Christian writers and organizations were concerned for the country's instability, having experienced a civil war and continuing to witness the north-south divide in addition to the problems of ethnic strife, military rule, and political backstabbing. Membership in the OIC, it was argued, would complicate every one of these problems. In one pamphlet, a Catholic priest itemized some of the political consequences that were to be expected:

It would mean that the post of the President and the Foreign Minister will be reserved to Muslims if they have to attend and meaningfully take part in the OIC meetings. The fact that not one single delegate to the meeting of January 1986 bringing our application to the Conference was a Christian indicates fully what the situation will be like in future. It was an all Muslim Delegation. Even the Ministry of Petroleum resources was quickly handed over to the leader of the Nigerian delegation to Fez, Rilwanu Lukman . . . to make it easy for him to deal with his Arab Muslim brothers in the OPEC while the Nigerian public was yet unaware of what was happening. Will a Nigerian Christian Head of State support Islamic, sometimes anti-Christian resolution? . . . There are also obvious problems on the foreign policy. Some

of the decisions and resolutions of the OIC are in no way in accordance with our known traditional foreign policy. For example, in 1978, the OIC declared support for Somalia against Ethiopia. Nigeria, with other OAU members took a different view. We now have the case of Sudan in hand where there is conflict between Muslims and Christians. Should OIC declare support for the Muslims, what would Nigerian Christians be expected to do support the Muslims there, and perhaps send soldiers to fight the Christians if the OIC should decide on that?

80

Many commentators were worried about the religious consequences of joining the OIC. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) said that this was but one step of a larger Islamization agenda: "There is no conceivable way by which full membership of OIC can be effective without using it to promote, canvass, or impose Islam on Nigeria."⁸¹ Some drew parallels between Nigeria and Sudan, arguing that the Islamization plan in Sudan that led the country to civil war had begun gradually.⁸² Membership in the OIC would encroach on the religious rights of Christians by forcing them to live under an Islamic regime. Because of the charter binding on OIC members, Nigeria would be forced to revise its constitution, beginning with the removal of the word secular. Nigerian funds would be used to finance the spread of Islam and Islamic institutions. One analyst believed that OIC membership violated freedom of religion, conscience, and thought, claiming that Nigerian courts of law would be subordinated to courts of al-Shari'a.⁸³

Muslims counterattacked in defense of the Babangida administration. They said the Christians were exaggerating the negative implications of the OIC; liberal Muslims said that OIC membership could only be managed if Christians were tolerant. They pointed out that some Christian heads of state (the leaders of Senegal and Rwanda) attended

OIC meetings. Moreover, they emphasized, the OIC could be expected to financially assist the country in times of trouble: the OIC would grant monetary and technical assistance, and the Islamic Development Bank made low-interest loans to OIC members. All of these claims implied that the OIC was not primarily a religious organization, but something akin to the United Nations. They further pointed out that OIC membership was no more in violation of religious freedoms than were Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the Vatican.⁸⁴

These Muslim responses were met point-for-point by the Christians. To the assertion that some non-Islamic nations and Christian heads of state were members of the OIC, Christians said that these were cases of troubled, opportunistic leadership seeking quick fixes to their serious domestic problems.⁸⁵

Christians were no more impressed by the argument of economic benefit for two reasons: first, those countries that had obtained support were no better off than Nigeria; and second, Nigeria would sink more money into the OIC than it would ever recoup. Nigeria was then the seventh richest among the forty-six members of the OIC, and would therefore be expected to carry a larger share of the financial burden of the organization's activities. Nigeria ought not to aim at leaving the IMF for the Islamic Development Bank, but rather should seek self-reliance. Catholic bishops asked the Muslims to look at the demand for withdrawal from the OIC from a political point of view: "Withdrawal in no way infringes on the fundamental religious rights of our Muslim compatriots. OIC membership is not one of the pillars of Islam."

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Because of the extent of Christian opposition to OIC membership, the government could no longer assume popular support for its position, and so it resorted to damage control. In a panic, the government decided in early February 1986, to set up a committee that would examine the implications of OIC membership.⁸⁷ The committee was headed by Lt.Col.John Shagaya, a federal minister and a Christian from central Nigeria, and 24 other members, all men of distinction who variously represented the interests of the government, Islam, and Christianity.⁸⁸ This was to be the first time that so many representatives of different religious groups would come together.

Babangida's initial address to the committee revealed his reasons for surreptitiously joining the OIC.⁸⁹ Many of his justifications were directed toward the Christians and secular media. He and his administration thought the OIC to be a laudable organization that could allow Nigeria to rally against racism and colonialism. The OIC,

he said, was no different from the United Nations and many of its agencies, and it in fact cooperated with all these agencies. Except for Turkey, all OIC members were also members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Nigeria's neighbors and many other OAU countries belonged to the OIC, Babangida explained, only because of the advantages membership offered. Some of these countries were secular states with large non-Muslim populations, and Christian ministers lead their OIC delegations. "Despite its name, member nations of the OIC are distinguished more by their identity as third world nations than by religious affinities. Its business is strictly international cooperation and the struggle for economic development and self reliance."

Admitting publicly that the country was a full-fledged member, he charged the committee with considering the implications of membership, especially in regard to its effects on national interests. Where he stood on

the issue was clear enough: OIC membership would not jeopardize any national interests. He felt the Nigeria's OIC membership ought to be as unproblematic as were its membership in the United Nations, OPEC, the British Commonwealth, the World Olympic Committee, and many international organizations. In other words, there was nothing unusual or dangerous about the OIC. He denied charges of acting under pressure or attempting to assert Islam's authority over other religions.

As he had done before, he blamed the media for focusing so much attention on the OIC debate. He urged the media to "have faith in the good intentions of the rulers" and to consider the facts and national interests before questioning his actions. He appealed to religious leaders to assist his government in maintaining peace and stability, which had to be in place before anyone could take the time to worship. He restated that the country's constitution did "not adopt any religion as a state religion." To impose any state religion would be "an invitation to chaos." Different religions had coexisted for generations, and they would continue to do so.

Attempting to shift the debate away from the OIC issue, he said that the "struggle that must engage our attention therefore, is not between one religion and another, but between a religious life and the general slide into Godlessness, crime and violence." In concluding his address, he broadened the task of the Committee beyond the narrow focus of the OIC issue: it was to offer suggestions on how the government could assist the religious and spiritual development of Nigerians in ways that would satisfy different religious groups, and was to consider the creation of a permanent forum as "a clearinghouse for ideas on how religion can best serve the national issue, struggle for economic recovery and independence as well as for political cohesion and stability."

The Committee deliberated for three days. Discussions were conducted in a calm atmosphere far removed from the combative nature of the public discussions. On 5 February it released a statement, far shorter than Babangida's address, and devoid of any florid rhetoric.

90 The statement contained a summary of its four essential points:

- i. We note that the assurance given by the Federal Military Government that our full membership of the OIC does not in any way imply that Nigeria has become or will become an Islamic state has addressed the undoubted reservations expressed by some sections of the country.
- ii. We also note that these reservations can only be cleared with time and after further consultation.
- iii. Furthermore we agreed that the peace and stability of our multi-religious nation and the secular character of Nigeria must be preserved.

iv. In this regard, we also agreed that nothing should be done to infringe on section 10 of the constitution which states: "The Government of Federal or of a State shall not adopt any religion as state religion."

The rest of the statement consisted of a pledge from religious leaders to educate and guide their people "on the supreme need for peace, stability and unity in our dear country," and it welcomed suggestions for the establishment of a permanent consultative forum on religious issues. The committee adjourned for a few days to formulate final recommendations to the government.

The Christian community was in shock, having expected the committee to tell the government in no uncertain terms that it had made a mistake. The atmosphere became even more poisoned, with no abatement in Christian demand for immediate withdrawal from the OIC. Even members of the committee spoke more strongly as individuals. Bishop Ganaka, for instance, was to sign another document that same month, one which reflected the position of the Catholic Church on the issue. This was the famous Catholic bishops' press release following their deliberations on the OIC issue of 18-22 February 1986.

91

The bishops felt the OIC issue had soured the relations between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, making it difficult to build a united country based on equity, social justice, and respect for human rights regardless of religion. The bishops were disappointed that the government had even admitted to OIC membership without acknowledging that it should have consulted the public before joining. They affirmed without any ambiguity that "we do not and shall not agree to Nigeria's membership of the OIC." It dismissed all the government's justifications as unconvincing. They specified a number

of points of discontent, some of which had already been made public in the media and by other Christian organizations:

Our continued membership is perceived by many as indirectly but effectively making Nigeria an Islamic State despite all assurances to the contrary. To elevate one religion to the status of a state religion is clearly against our Constitution. . . . With its religious pluralism, Nigeria cannot as a state become a member of an international body whose objective are essentially the promotion of one particular religion. . . . To do that would mean injustice to other religions and to their adherents. This basic injustice in an area so all-embracing and sensitive as religion, is bound to manifest itself also in other areas of national lifepolitical, economic, social, culture, legal, *etc.*

For instance, the Charter of the Organisation of Islamic Conference clearly implies that the Head of State and Foreign Minister of a member nation

shall be Muslims. . . . How can Nigeria guarantee this, unless it entrenches the absurdity of making political leadership the exclusive preserve of a particular religious group?

Our economic plight is serious no doubt. But the solution does not lie with OIC anymore than with I.M.F. whose loan the nation decisively rejected in favour of looking inward for economic salvation. A quick termination of the OIC adventure is, in our view, urgently needed to restore the nation's undivided attention to the battle for economic survival at hand.

The Catholics promised the government their cooperation in rebuilding the country, but at the same time called on all Christians to be steadfast in defending their freedoms, to be earnest in prayer, and to be courageous in standing by the truth "so that justice and peace may reign supreme." A few weeks later, the Catholic Church publicly instructed its members not to read the *National Concord*, a newspaper owned by Chief M. K. O. Abiola, a Muslim, because of its support for the OIC.

92 Others joined the Catholics in condemning the government. Many saw the OIC decision as a threat to the country's survival, as a blow to a secular state that must separate religion from the government, and as a subversion of fundamental freedoms.⁹³

The pro-OIC Muslims did not stand by and accept the bishops' actions. The Council of 'Ulama, the umbrella organization of Islamic preachers, attacked the Christian leaders, threatened calamity if the government should withdraw from the OIC, and made many immediate and only vaguely related demands, perhaps intended to diminish the significance of the OIC issue, or perhaps merely to say that they, too, had deep grievances:

Withdrawal of diplomatic relations with the Vatican;

Replacing the Gregorian Calendar with the Islamic Calendar A.H. as the

official calendar;

Replacement of Saturday and Sunday with Thursday and Friday as workfree days;

Replacement of crosses with the crescent on government hospitals, clinics, institutions, ambulances, first-aid kits;

Replacement of 1st January with 1st Muharram as the beginning of the New Year;

Changing the salutations of the Armed Forces from their "Christian" forms;

Changing the designs of university academic gowns as these resembled those of the Christian Choir groups;

Replacing the "Christian" common law with the Sharia;

Stopping laying wreaths at the grave of the unknown soldier as it was purely Christian;

Changing the vacation periods of educational institutions as they were tuned to coincide with Christmas and Easter holidays;

Withdrawing landing rights granted to Christian organizations at Murzar Bishara airstrip in Plateau State and other places for their international flights without passing through our international airports for security checks.

94

To this day, the government has been walking a tightrope on the OIC issue: in order to satisfy Muslims, it has not officially withdrawn its membership; and to satisfy the Christians, it has refused to play an active role in the OIC or to advertise its participation in the organization. Its Advisory Council on Religious Affairs has met with failure because of deep mistrust among the members and because its Christian members believe that they are being manipulated to placate the Muslims.

The acrimonious controversies over the issue of state secularity, al-Shari'a, and the OIC have created an atmosphere conducive to violence. The 'ulama and those Muslims who wish to politically capitalize on Islam are dissatisfied with the outcome of their struggles. There is still no satisfactory Nigerian *umma*, al-Shari'a is not applied nationally, and Nigeria continues to be officially a secular state. Christians remain convinced that the Islamic intelligentsia has not given up its agenda of Islamization and the power-centered manipulation of religious issues. With most outstanding issues unresolved, opportunities for violence and aggression are legion.

4

Religious Leadership and Agencies of Mobilization

We conclude our study of the background of modern Nigerian violence with a discussion of the role of religious leaders, who not only have influence over the people they lead, but also indirectly affect the whole nation when the government reacts in various ways to their pressures. State functionaries and politicians see the nation's religious leaders as pawns to be manipulated for votes and political gain. Muslims have historically found it profitable to identify with the sheikh,

1 and a prominent Muslim writer maintains that mallams often use Islam in political campaigns, sometimes going so far as to force members of the opposition parties to swear on the Qur'an in support of the party in power.² Religious leaders have much in common with the politicians: they lead sizeable flocks, speak on behalf of millions, and pressure the state for specific policies; moreover, they organize protest against the state and their rivals.

In another sense, religious leaders behave as moral authorities. They criticize the state for ethical lapses, corruption, mismanagement, and disregard for the poor. Since the state is incapable of resolving the definitional problems of many issues, such as, for instance, the role of women and children in society, or the degree to which Western influences should be accepted, religious leaders have taken on the role of moral authority. By prescribing the "correct" values for the government, they do not speak for the popular consensus, but rather accentuate societal divisions. Their decisions are based on ideological frameworks built on dogma and religious

history, without thinking about whether the alternative policies they suggest can adequately address the complications of the present and the unpredictability of the future. As social and political critics, religious leaders often attain significantly more popularity and authority than the official political leaders have.

The religious leadership plays an integral part in the organization and mobilization of interest groups, whether they are making specific demands of the government, inciting violence, or defending their members in trouble. The leadership gives a public voice to religious groups and movements. They speak for otherwise ill-defined and incoherent religious-political groups. While acting as spokespeople for these groups, the leaders have yet to directly address the limitations of using religion to build such groups. As I shall make clear below, these groups create problems for one another, standing in the way of their own search for peace and unity. Neither of the two major such groups are able to build political parties or even to suggest coherent solutions to the economic and communal difficulties that lead to violence. There is much talk of the intervention of God, coming in the form of prophets, or of religious solutions to the Nigerian crises. But such notions lack specificity and do not really relate to most aspects of the modern societal management. Nigerians belonging to radical movements believe that these religious organizations and their leaders constitute a significant part of the country's problems. Balarabe Musa, a Marxist-oriented northern political leader and a Muslim, has gone on record saying that the Christian Association of Nigeria used the al-Shari'a controversy to intensify religious violence "for the selfish purposes of the leaders and the continuation of the 11th century religious crusade conducted by Europeans."

3 Musa feels that CAN leaders support the state's exploitation of the

poor and its human-rights abuses. He criticizes the Jama'atu Nasril Islamiyya (Society for the Victory of Islam) equally, claiming they support oppression of the poor.⁴

How do religious leaders acquire such power and influence without the police, army, or money on their side? Unlike secular leaders, they do not fall into the category identified by Max Weber as deriving authority from the rational-legal domain. Their power comes instead from traditional religious sources: the power to preach, teach, dogmatize, and lead congregations. They depend on perceptions of moral uprightness and justness, opposing themselves to the corruption of those in political power. They also rely on their charisma, their ability to arouse, inspire, and stimulate a crowd.

I shall focus here on the two leading Islamic and Christian organizations: the Jama'atu Nasril Islamiyya and the Christian Association of Ni-

geria using two of their prominent leaders as case studies. These four examples illustrate broader issues and point to the connections that exist between organizations, leadership, the state, and Nigeria's religious crises.

The Jama'atu Nasril Islamiyya (JNI)

The JNI was the first major Islamic organization in postindependence Nigeria, founded by the northern Muslim intelligentsia under the leadership of Premier Ahmadu Bello, *Sardauna* of Sokoto. According to Abubakar Gumi, one of JNI's founding members, the organization was born out of a desire to spread Islam and to educate Muslims about the tenets of the faith. *Sardauna* Bello, in collaboration with a number of prominent Muslims, decided in 1962 to set up a formal organization to achieve these religious ends. Leading Muslims in Kaduna, including all the Muslim Permanent Secretaries as well as other politicians, were invited to the organizational meeting. Participants at the meeting discussed how best to reach out to converts and other Nigerians who might want to know more about Islam, and decided to establish an organization to attain these objectives.

5 The JNI was founded, officers appointed, funds secured, and an office established in Gumi's house. The organization's name, according to Gumi, was intended to call to mind Usmanu dan Fodio's *Jama'a*, the army he led in his nineteenth-century jihad.

The JNI quickly established links with prominent Muslims across the country. Muhammad Gardee, a Kaduna-based Pakistani businessman, donated twelve thousand copies of the Qur'an, a prominent malam gave his school over to JNI, and even the Ministry of Education gave muchneeded funds. The JNI also approached other Islamic countries for support, securing a donation of £300,000 from the Kuwaiti

government and a long-term commitment to £50,000 annually from Saudi Arabia. The JNI proposed to build schools, a secretariat, a number of programs for which it received generous additional assistance from the Saudis. Thus equipped, JNI was able to take an active role in *Sardauna* Bello's conversion campaigns, and Gumi and other JNI leaders began embarking on mass-conversion campaigns across Nigeria.

While Gumi's account portrayed the establishment of JNI as a largely educational institution, it also had a significant political dimension. From the very beginning, it set out to create an umbrella organization for prominent northerners in the NPC and the civil service. Abubakar Imam, the first General Secretary, and other executives were powerful politicians. All

of the emirs in the caliphate were JNI members, the sultan of Sokoto was president-general of JNI, and *Sardauna* Bello was president of JNI's administrative General Purpose Committee. Nigerian Prime Minister Balewa was sufficiently persuaded of JNI's cause that he pledged a £1 million donation, although his administration fell before the donation came through. The JNI's connection with the Muslim world was not just a financial one, but was politically motivated.

Even if the original intention of JNI was religious, it soon began to engage in the political struggle of the north against the south, assisting in the push to forge a strong Islamic identity in the north. It was also active in spreading Islam throughout central Nigeria, a move that generated considerable hostility in this region. When *Sardauna* Bello and other prominent northern leaders were killed in the coup of January 1966, JNI and its remaining leaders looked upon Major Nzeogwu and his cohorts as representatives of an evil Igbo Christian movement hostile to Islam, and not as radical figures with political aims.

6 The Igbo were accused of killing mainly northerners and those few Christians and southerners with northern sympathies. Gumi saw propagandist motives in the circulation of photographs of *Sardauna* Bello's body and his burning house, with captions in which Nzeogwu recounted his heroism.⁷

After 1966, JNI continued to promote the interests of a unified north and the Islamic cause. The association was displeased with the Gowon administration's creation of 12 new states in 1967, believing that this move was directed at subverting northern unity.⁸ The JNI saw itself as in direct opposition to the Christian Association of Nigeria on the issue of secularity. To improve its position in the struggle with Christians, JNI spread to the south, seeking support from the Yoruba.

It recast its mission as the representation of all Nigerian Muslims, irrespective of their particularities of affiliation or belief. In 1973, JNI merged with the West Joint Muslim Organization (WESIOMO), forming the powerful Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), which was embraced by most Muslims, and recognized by the government as the main representative organization of Nigerian Islam. The NSCIA sought to advance the interests of Nigerian Muslims, and to "serve as the only channel of contact on Islamic matters"⁹ between the government and external bodies. The sultan of Sokoto was the NSCIA's official head. Its leading members regarded secularism as a direct attack on Islam,¹⁰ and as "a disease of the mind" that would eventually lead the country to "untruth and misery."¹¹ They believed that Nigerians should view religion as political as well as personal, and should turn the state itself over to Allah.

The JNI has always been bitterly opposed to CAN and its leadership. The active branches of CAN in places like Jos and Kaduna have been accused of colluding with southern Christians to destroy the north, paving the way for southern domination of Nigeria.

12 CAN has been further accused of being part of a Zionist plot to destroy Nigerian Islam and to weaken solidarity between Nigeria and the Arab world.¹³ CAN is regarded by JNI as a covertly political association. On 15 June 1990, JNI paid for a mass media blitz to warn all Muslims to be wary of CAN and its members, who they claimed hated Muslims and were working solely for political ends.¹⁴ Some members of JNI even tried to persuade the military government to outlaw CAN. In 1990, when the military approved only two political parties during preparations for the Third Republic, some JNI members accused CAN of maneuvering to becoming a third party:

When a religious person or body takes issue on such matters as civil service appointments, ministerial selection, armed forces deployments, and pardon for assassins and when moreover, use is made of a platform or a reference group not validated but in fact outlawed by the constitution of the country, then we are in the zone of incitement, sedition, attempts to cause disorder and disturbance of the peace; if not out-and-out subversion.¹⁵

As far as JNI is concerned, members of CAN are not true Christians; leaders like Okogie are described as evil, as anti-Muslim devils.¹⁶

The JNI championed the cause of Nigeria's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. During the controversy described in the previous chapter in this book, JNI mobilized a huge propaganda campaign in support of the government, pressuring the military government not to yield to Christian demands.

Many members of JNI still believe that Muslims are victims of

persecution by the Christians and even by the state. They feel that southern politicians, in collaboration with CAN, want nothing less than the entrenchment of Christian privileges and the eternal subjugation of the north to a southern Christian elite. Muslims should not be denied "rights to the national cake [that] the Christians have" in a country where, according to JNI, Muslims constitute 75% of the population.¹⁷

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has emerged as the leading voice of Christians, and is generally the best-known Christian organization

in Nigeria. Its activities are much more public than those of its Islamic counterparts, perhaps because it uses the media more effectively. CAN was founded in 1976, but controversy still surrounds its origins, partly because some individuals seek credit for its foundation, while others connect it with older organizations.

18

By 1986, CAN had become quite well known. It had succeeded in establishing a bureaucratic structure of officers, organizations, and welldefined objectives. Its membership originally comprised just a few mostly Protestant denominations and the Catholics. But by the 1980s, its constituency had become broader and better-defined, owing to the admission of many more churches, especially Pentecostal groups. CAN divided its membership into five branches that covered at least ninety percent of the Christian population,¹⁹ with a focus on churches rather than individuals. The first division of CAN's membership are the Catholics, who are perhaps the most influential group in CAN, undoubtedly because it has supplied many of its officers and remains active in CAN's affairs. The second is the Christian Council of Nigeria, an umbrella organization for a number of Protestant churches. The third is the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), which comprises the Aladura churches, the Celestial Church of Christ, and the United African Methodist Church. The fourth is the TEKAN/ECWA, a group of evangelical churches, mainly from the north, that trace their origins to either the Sudan Interior Mission or the Sudan United Mission. The last group is the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, which includes Pentecostal churches, most of which were founded in the 1970s and can be described as charismatic or fundamentalist.

CAN has tried to remain open to as many churches as possible,

encouraging them to register with its state branches and providing for denominations and movements to be involved in its Lagos national headquarters. In the north, where most of the country's volatile crises occurred, many churches had joined CAN for legal representation in such matters as requests for land for new churches, fighting human-rights violations, or to getting compensation for the victims of religious riots.²⁰

There are, however, some problems with CAN's membership. Certain churches are excluded from membership, among them the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Olumba Olumba Obu of southeastern Nigeria. The Jehovah's Witnesses do not belong to CAN for political reasons; they do not believe that the politicization of Christian unity is appropriate. The Olumba Olumba Obu, on the other hand, are excluded for theological reasons, since their conception of the trinity is considered un-Christian.

CAN says it does not aim for doctrinal or theological consistency. It

only affirms that all its members are committed to "One God in the Trinity," and that Christ is the center of the pastoral duties and life of its member churches. Since member churches disagree among themselves on doctrine and liturgy, CAN maintains that it seeks unity in diversity, a strategy stated in CAN's motto "that they all may be one." Its critics counter that CAN is not a spiritual organization, but a political one, precisely because it is overly tolerant of differences in religious views.

Whereas JNI is funded in part by wealthy foreign governments, CAN's budget comes from charity and member contributions, and its financial position is usually rather weak. It relies on volunteer service from committed members and from organizations like the Catholic Secretariat. Its Lagos headquarters is manned by a small staff, although its regional branch in the north is fairly well-staffed. Occasionally, CAN receives funding from the government, which is usually targeted at specific projects like compensating religious-riot victims.

CAN's constitution stipulates three administrative bodies.

21 The first and the most powerful is the Assembly, which enjoys supreme authority on all issues. The Assembly comprises representatives from all affiliated churches. Next in command is the National Executive Committee (NEC), CAN's pan-Nigerian executive body. The State Standing Committees (SSC) implements decisions at the regional level and also reports issues of local concern to the NEC. There are also auxiliary Youth Wings and Women's Wings across the country at the local level. These wings meet regularly and submit comments and suggestions to the NEC and SSCs.

CAN speaks through its national officers (the president, vice-

president, treasurer, general secretary, and assistant general secretary) and the officers of the various state branches and the auxiliaries.

Decisions are arrived at by consensus. CAN does not always speak with one voice because of differences among member churches, which sometimes become differences between member churches and CAN leadership. The vocal and dynamic northern regional branch of CAN tends to dominate CAN opinion, and nationally, Protestants and Catholics seem to have a greater voice in the Assembly than do other denominations. Certain officers within CAN are more articulate and aggressive than others; Archbishop Okogie, for instance, was extremely vocal during his 1980s presidency of CAN, sometimes at the risk of being criticized by more moderate members. He was forced in 1990 to defend his claim that he spoke for the entire association.²²

CAN has become an intensely political organization. In its early years, its politics were subtle, if they existed at all. But as CAN came to disagree

with certain government policies, it began to write memoranda and send delegations to meet with the government. Cardinal Ekandem, the first president of CAN, fostered this approach and opened many sub-rosa lines of communication with the government.

In the 1980s and beyond, as violence escalated Christians became more convinced that Muslims were bent on turning Nigeria into an Islamic state, CAN's strategy turned away from diplomacy to militancy and even occasionally to open opposition to the state. In 1990, the Kaduna branch of CAN proposed an "Ex-Servicemen's Christian Fellowship" in which former members of the military would train young Christians to protect themselves and to lead protest groups when necessary. There was talk of creating a Christian army to defend Christians and their churches against so-called Muslim fanatics.

23 At the same time, CAN's leadership was taken over by more publicly assertive and militant people, as Okogie's story below will exemplify. In the north, where CAN's Kaduna branch had become a thorn in the government's side, the self-described "fanatical Christian" branch secretary Samuel Salifu, a mechanical-engineering teacher at Kaduna Polytechnic until he resigned in 1991 to devote all his time to CAN, began to make inflammatory and extremist statements such as his famous assertion that Muslims do not worship the same God as Christians.²⁴

The state branches of CAN act like local political associations, driven by a need to react immediately to political issues. Each State Standing Committee of CAN usually comprising priests and pastors does not only discuss religious issues, but also alerts headquarters to burning political issues and suggests ways in which CAN should respond.

CAN's political objectives include the continued assurance of

Nigeria's secularity, the prevention of Islamization, and the gain of power and resources for the Christian constituency. In pursuing all these ends, CAN usually informs its constituents what its positions are and how to carry them out.

CAN has set out to mobilize all Nigerian Christians to achieve its objectives. It falls on the timeworn strategy of pulpit preaching, and its leaders make political statements right in their worship services. They tend to make bold statements on the occasions of national holidays or religious festivals. Christian prayer groups also provide opportunity for political discussions. CAN uses the media effectively, including the secular media, to publicize its activities and opinions. There is an extensive network of church-controlled media, including the widely-read newspapers *Today's Challenge*, *Catholic Life*, and *Independent*. CAN has worked out an effective, albeit imperfect, means of bypassing the government in making communications

during times of crisis rather than communicating by telephone or post, both of which are operated by the government and are consequently insecure, they maintain a network of fieldworkers who relay messages by word of mouth. In relating to the Nigerian government and its functionaries, CAN deals directly with top federal officers rather than with the states. When it wishes to take on local issues, it converts them into national issues and takes them to the federal government.

CAN has learned how to manipulate the media successfully for the popularization of its views among millions of people. Contacts have been established with influential Christians in the government and the army, and these contacts are used to lobby for Christian interests in policy decisions. In several instances, CAN has used the legal system to fight for its cause, taking various governments to court over a variety of issues such as the takeover of mission schools and hospitals. Even when such actions are slow and unrewarding, they generate considerable publicity for the concerns of CAN and its members.

I turn now to the major political issues with which CAN has concerned itself. It has staunchly and continually opposed any form of Nigerian Islamization. CAN disputed census figures that depicted an Islamic majority in Nigeria and challenged JNI's claim that three-quarters of Nigeria's population was Muslim. CAN further came up with its own figures (without revealing its procedures), which asserted the Christian population was 71.4 million, a majority of Nigerians estimated national population of 117.3 million.

25

CAN has repeatedly called attention to the dominant influence of Muslims in national politics. It monitors every executive appointment to state and federal governments, keeping an eye on the proportion of Christians to Muslims in the government. In 1990, CAN noisily

protested that the federal government was dominated by Muslims about eighty percent of the cabinet were Muslims, and the remaining twenty percent occupied inconsequential offices. Twenty-seven federal ministers were Muslims, five were Christians, and three did not declare their religious affiliation.²⁶ In December 1989, when the Babangida regime reshuffled the cabinet and filled it completely with Muslims, CAN was outraged. On 11 January 1990, the northern branch of CAN organized a massive protest against what it perceived as gross discrimination against Christians in the formation of the new federal cabinet.²⁷ In Kaduna, Jos, Bauchi, and Yola, thousands of Christians took to the streets in protest against what they described as "alienation of Christians from the country's government."²⁸ In Kaduna, the protesters were led by Archbishop Peter Jatau, chairman of Northern States

CAN, and by bishops and other prominent CAN leaders. The demonstrators delivered a letter to the governor of Kaduna state, warning him that Christians could no longer put their "confidence, safety and security" in Babangida and his ruling council, "but [rather] in the hands of Almighty God." Demonstrators in Jos defied riot police and tear gas attacks to deliver the same letter to the governor of Jos, carrying placards and singing Christian hymns. The governor of Bauchi, although angered by the demonstrators, was forced to accept the same letter. Christian protesters in Bauchi carried placards that clearly stated their feelings: "A forceful Islamization impossible," "No Arab Colonization," and "Christians have no confidence in IBB Administration."

29

The successful protest made national and international news. It turned out to be the largest Christian protest in Nigerian history; it was well organized and kept under sufficient wraps that even the state governments were surprised by the number of protesters. The event demonstrated the power of protest to CAN and gave it confidence in the possibility of organizing similar protests in the future.³⁰

On 22 April, a few months after the public protest, young southerners, mainly Christians, led an attempted coup against the federal government based on allegations similar to CAN's. For the first time in the Nigerian history, the coup was based on a religious issue: the organizers said that part of their aim was to free Nigeria from the grip of northern Muslims. Muslims quickly accused CAN of organizing the attempted coup. Babangida was advised to dispense with his magnanimous attitude and to come out against CAN and Okogie as enemies.³¹ While the government refused to implicate CAN officially, it nevertheless arrested 59 Christians, who were detained for almost

two months.³² Among the detainees were CAN leaders including Samuel Salifu, who had previously criticized the government for being pro-Islam, and Jolly Tanko Yusuf, the famous CAN leader who was active in the January 1990 protests.

CAN branches at the state level have pursued aims similar to those of the national organization in defending Christian interests. The Gongola branch criticized the state government's decision to build a mosque at the Government House, which they felt implied that no Christian would ever be governor, regardless of the large number of Christians in Gongola's population.³³ The most combative state branch of CAN has been in Kaduna, which has engaged in fighting the state government over an extraordinary number of issues, defending the interests of northern Christians.

CAN tirelessly fights what it perceives as anti-Christian discrimination. Their general complaint, especially in the North, is that the govern-

ment deliberately sets out to limit Christian evangelism, all the while allowing and encouraging the spread of Islam. They charge that Christian missionaries are denied entrance visas to Nigeria and that many of the same were expelled in the 1970s. They further allege that the government makes it difficult for Christians to obtain land for the construction of new churches, and that in Muslim-controlled states, a deliberate attempt has been made to ensure that new churches are located outside of city walls, rendering them physically almost inaccessible. In 1988, CAN issued a well-publicized press release expressing its anger at many of these inequities. The notice read in part as follows:

Our schools and colleges have been taken over by government and yet we see schools and colleges established under the umbrella of another religion [Islam] being sponsored and entirely financed and administered by government; we have been denied access to the use of the electronic media in certain parts of the country and yet another religion has the monopoly of rendering a near 24-hours religious broadcast in the same areas; some States have deliberately refused to accept and recognize the growing population of Christians in the States thus depriving the Christians not only of their rights, but also questioning their claim to being indigenes of such State which claim to be religiously homogeneous.

34

There are many other issues of concern to CAN, at both the local and national levels. In Kwara State, the local CAN branch said that the government denied Christians chieftaincy titles in favor of Muslims.³⁵ CAN complained that state governments in many parts of the north limited the rights of Christians to build churches, worship, or observe important public celebrations like Palm Sunday.³⁶ In the north, where churches were burned or destroyed, the response of CAN has consistently been to condemn Muslims for such acts and to blame the

state for condoning them.

Times without number, CAN has responded to issues that affect the welfare concerns of Christians and the promotion of their religion. In 1987, following the destruction of a number of churches, CAN's Kaduna branch launched a 60 million naira capital campaign to rebuild them. Held in the capital, the event turned out to be the largest-ever Christian fundraising gathering. Media publicity was overwhelming, and the event did not fade from public view for months, because CAN took the pro-Muslim *New Nigerian* newspaper to court for refusing to publish an advertisement for the fundraiser, in violation of a binding contract. CAN told its constituents that the fires that had burned their churches had "welded us together for good."³⁷ Christians were urged to unite and to prepare to fight for the

replacement of "wrong with right, evil with good, ungodliness with righteousness, religious sentiments with truth, injustice with justice and hate with love."

38

CAN, predictably, interpreted the country's membership in the OIC as nothing less than a declaration of Nigeria as an Islamic country.³⁹ CAN sees itself as the defender of a secular Nigerian state.

Like any major association, CAN has been criticized for its strategy and statements. There are Christian leaders who believe that such a confrontational approach is unnecessary, preferring diplomatic and peaceful interaction with politicians.⁴⁰ The Muslim intelligentsia represented by the JNl and the Muslim Students Society actively detest CAN, although its criticisms tend to read like condemnations of Christianity, furthering the tension that defines contemporary relations between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria.

Two Personalities: al-Hajj Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and Archbishop Anthony Olubunmi Okogie

Two religious leaders, Gumi and Okogie, singularly dominated the political-religious scene throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. As *Grand Khadi* from 1962 to 1985, Gumi was for many years the most dominant Islamic leader in northern Nigeria. When he died in 1993, his funeral was attended by current and past heads of state. Okogie is the head of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos and the president of CAN. In discussing these two personalities, I am concerned mainly with their politics and beliefs, which are, of course, informed by their religious beliefs.

Both Okogie and Gumi can be described as political actors. One

biographer has described Okogie as a national leader constantly in touch with powerful figures in the government, religion, and business, and recognized as a "man of influence, determined, fearless, truthful and poignant."⁴¹ Gumi had a longer career in politics and established more impact than Okogie, which is why I have devoted more space to him here. Gumi was a career religious leader and a close ally of Ahmadu Bello. His books and his television and radio sermons reached and influenced millions of people. He was a principal adviser to *Sardauna* Bello and other powerful politicians on judicial and religious matters. Gumi admitted having influenced the *Sardauna* to actively promote the cause of Islam in the region. He idolized Bello and was full of gratitude to him for giving Gumi the opportunity to serve the north. When the *Sardauna* was killed in the January 1966 coup,

it was Gumi who went to his house to recover his body, arrange for burial, and conduct the funeral rites. Gumi was deeply saddened by the loss, concerned about what Bello's demise would mean for the north, about the greed of those who had killed him, and about "the prejudice and contempt that sought to disgrace his name after his death."

42 The day after the burial, he was summoned to appear before Nzeogwu, the instigator of the coup, to answer to the false charge that he was storing weapons in preparation for a jihad against non-Muslims. According to Gumi's account, Nzeogwu made it clear to him that he did not believe that there should be a separate Islamic court system. Gumi felt the plotters of that coup and many other Igbo Christians held Muslims in contempt. He dismissed allegations of corruption that were leveled against Bello along with all the other reasons used to justify the coup.

After 1966, Gumi became a self-appointed spokesman for the dead *Sardauna*, defending him against charges of corruption and other lapses. No Nigerian head of state failed to involve him in religious matters. Only Buhari had trouble with Gumi, although they did have opportunities to discuss their differences. For his unflinching commitment to Islam and teaching, and for his prodigious body of writing,⁴³ the Saudi government awarded him the prestigious King Faisal Award in 1987. While this was his most cherished award, he had received many other honors, including the President Nasser Award in 1963, the title of Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1965, and honorary doctorates from Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello Universities in 1965.

Gumi and Okogie are both deeply religious, bold, strongly motivated, and controversial leaders. Both are manipulative men, able to make

political gains for their religions while claiming to represent the masses. Both have succeeded in becoming influential politicians and representatives of large constituencies. Neither evidences fear of the state, each thinking of himself as a man of courage with God on his side. In 1948, Gumi said that "it did not really take special courage to win any dispute if one really spoke the truth."⁴⁴ He had cause to attack powerful emirs and some of their practices in ways that angered them. As late as the 1990s, he was still doing so:

It was really an irony that the emirs despised the association [the Izala]. But it was not surprising considering that many of them were not learned, and did not care to offer guidance to the people. Worse still, they had brought back to life all the corrupt practices against which Sheikh dan Fodio went to war with the former Hausa rulers. They had become kings with big palaces, full of servants and courtiers, and demanded other people to bow down

before them. They kept concubines and did not really fear God's anger. Were all these not what Sheikh dan Fodio despised and wrote extensively against in his books?

45

Both Gumi and Okogie claim that they are not politicians, defining politics narrowly as the search for state power. Gumi boasted several times that Nigerian politics never affected him⁴⁶ and that he was "never inclined to active politics."⁴⁷ Okogie distinguishes between political leadership and political issues. As he puts it, he "engages in political issues and not in political leadership." Okogie's distinction has been adopted by at least one biographer. But Okogie wants political reforms, a moral social order, and more power for Christians. Each of Gumi and Okogie is a spiritual leader, a position of great power and influence. Okogie has been described as a "spiritual father and as a campaigner for human rights and religious freedom;" he "possesses real Authority, but he is never authoritarian."⁴⁸

Both are charismatic, able to use their knowledge of religion and their high status to win followers. But each has as many detractors as the other has followers: Gumi is not well-liked by Christians, Muslims have misgivings about Okogie.

They seek to bring about change by combining religion with practical politics. Each believes in converting the heathen to his own faith, in religious reforms, and in greater commitment of all Nigerians to faith. They believe that religion has the power to effect change and to curb corruption and immoral acts. Okogie is of the view that "religion is the vital force behind the development of a nation. When it is neglected, disharmony, destabilization, oppression and collapse result."⁴⁹ Gumi and Okogie want religions to be reformed so as to make the people more devout. Both believe that many people use

religion to selfish ends, claiming Islam or Christianity only whenever it profits them.⁵⁰

While Okogie does not want a Christian state, Gumi, for his part, would prefer that Nigeria become an Islamic state, based not on existing secular laws, but on the Qur'an, al-Shari'a, and the *sunna*, the collected sayings and deeds of the Prophet. In contrast to leaders of similar movements elsewhere (e.g., Iran, Tunisia, Jordan, or Morocco), Gumi was unable to move beyond specifics to talk about political platforms and the means by which power could be captured. He maintained naive expectation that anyone in a position of power could accomplish the revolutionary transformation as if by proxy. His relationship with *Sardauna* Bello was partly based on this expectation, while his criticisms of many other leaders were based largely on their failure to do what he wanted them to do. In

general, no Islamic movement in Nigeria has come up with any effective blueprint for the capture of power, or even with a strategy acceptable to the majority of Muslims. The strength of the major movements and leaders lies more in their trenchant criticisms than in any rigorous ability to transform their ideas into practice.

But Okogie and Gumi seem to be aware of their limited ability to effect change. They lack the direct power to make policy changes, and their own suggestions for change are hardly radical. While they criticize the government, they do not want to be alienated from the state. Both project the image that they are not reckless, jaundiced government critics. They have both been known to praise the government on occasion and to support government actions. Okogie, for instance, was full of praise for the government when it initiated a transition to a civilian regime, and he welcomed the promise of Babangida to respect civil liberties and human rights. He always prays for the stability of the government.

I now turn to detailed discussions of the careers and contributions of these two leaders to flesh out these generalizations.

Abubakar Gumi

He was born on 7 November 1924 to a family of preachers and scholars at Gumi, a village in the province of Sokoto. His father was a learned man and a noted teacher in and around Sokoto and Kebbi. He was known more widely as Malam (teacher) than by his real name, Mahmoud.

⁵¹ Gumi's father traced his lineage to an Arab sheikh of Bedouin nomads who migrated to the Sokoto area. Gumi's father is thought to have been born in the mid-nineteenth century, growing up as a citizen of the Sokoto caliphate. Gumi's mother, too, was a devout Muslim and literate in Arabic. In addition to being a teacher, Gumi's father was

later made alkali (judge) of the town during British rule. Gumi said that he was too young to observe his father in action, but he remembered that his father was displeased with laws being introduced by the Native Authority, complaining that the force of al-Shari'a was being eroded.⁵²

Gumi remembered his father as a successful teacher, constantly surrounded by students who came from far and wide to study under him. His father taught him to read books and to apply what he learned from them, to cultivate a liberal attitude, to bow down before nobody, and never to discriminate against young people and children. He was taught to share his meals with others and to give generously to the poor. Gumi's father built

the confidence of his children and students by encouraging them to ask questions and avoid ignorance.

Unlike his father, Gumi had the opportunity to broaden his own education, and he obtained limited secular education as well as formal training in Islamic law. In 1933, he enrolled at the Dogon Daji Elementary School, a major decision for the family because the school represented a different way of life. The elder Gumi was pressured by fellow-Muslims not to let his son attend the European-style school, since he already had every opportunity to excel as a learned man. Gumi explained that hostility to Western education at this time was deep because of the established Qur'anic system, the association of Western education with foreign domination and Christian missions, and the need to keep children at home to help with farm and domestic work. Islamic education was more suited to the latter kind of family needs, because Islamic schools were located nearby and organized around hours that did not interfere with domestic demands.

Gumi performed well at the elementary school, learning the new alphabet and its applications rather quickly. At the same time, he progressed rapidly with his Islamic education, and was soon able to read the entire Qur'an and to memorize large portions of it. He volunteered to instruct other students in Islamic matters, for which the school rewarded him with an appointment as *hakimin sallah* (prefect of religion). As a prefect, he supervised worship and upkeep at the mosque. At the Muslim school he made friendships that would become enduring and important with classmates including Ibrahim Dasuki, the future millionaire, politician, and sultan of Sokoto, and Aliyu Dogon Daji, the future *mutawalle* of Sokoto and treasurer of the Sokoto Native Authority (NA).

In 1935 he was transferred to another school, the Central Elementary School in Sokoto, where he studied for one year before continuing to

the Sokoto Middle School from 1936 to 1942. The Middle School represented the cream of the crop of Sokoto boys. He did very well at the school, except in his English-language studies, and his knowledge of Islam and Arabic deepened. He benefited from the presence of Malam Junaidu, the distinguished Muslim local historian who was to become *waziri* of Sokoto. At the Middle School, he was given the heavy responsibility of becoming an imam. As such, he was required to show leadership, do all his schoolwork, and lead prayer. As imam, and through a friendship with one of his most esteemed teachers, he became more involved in Islamic studies, reading such influential works as the *Risala*, *Mukhstar*, *Askari*, *Mu'alliqatis*, *Sitta*, *Muqamatul*, *Harini*, and others. He was also able to develop new friendships, among them a close relationship with future Nigerian president Shehu Shagari.

Upon graduation from the Middle School, he was immediately given a job with the NA and admitted to the prestigious Kaduna College. But he rejected the college's offer, preferring instead to specialize in religion; by this time, he had developed a strong devotion to Islam. When he opted to attend Northern Provinces Law School in Kano, many of his friends were shocked, advising him that a diploma from Kaduna would earn him a more lucrative career. The objections his associates raised to his becoming a master of Islamic law instead of acquiring a secular education stayed with Gumi for the rest of his life, forging his future attitude to Western education:

What was wrong with being alkali (a judge versed in Islamic law) or an Imam? Was the Imam (spiritual head of the Islamic Ummah) not the ideal of our scholars for centuries? I was greatly disturbed by the new direction in the people's thinking. Why should the desire to speak English with an Oxford accent overshadow my will to study the religion? I realised that we all had to belong to different professions, but why could others not do the same?

Even more disturbing was the new emphasis being given to the material rewards of learning. For centuries before the white men came, our system of education upheld the virtue of knowledge as a noble goal in itself. Our scholars had found it a pleasure to impart knowledge and the students saw it a duty to learn. Hardly did any of them count their rewards in the currency now being suggested.

53

In 1943, he went to Kano to study law. The school was modeled after Gordon College in Sudan and heavily influenced by Sudanese Islamic scholars. The Kano school emphasized the Maliki school of legal interpretations, and it required all students to speak impeccable Arabic. Here he began to express some of his differences with other Muslims that would characterize his career in later years. He recalled

an incident where he refused to remove his shoes before entering an associate's house, a practice that, while quite common, seemed to him unprescribed by Islam.⁵⁴

By 1944, the intellectual outlook that would stay with him for the rest of his life was fully formed. His thoughts were influenced by four scholars in particular, and his esteem for these four people was great:

The first is the writer of *Ashifa*, because his is the most comprehensive book devoted to the person of the Prophet. Islam is very emphatic about the fact that the Prophet was a man like other human beings, only that he had been chosen and protected in order to convey the religion to us. *Ashifa* takes its lessons from this and presents him in great detail, paying special attention to his social practices. There had never been a book before which teaches how to respect the Prophet and other prophets before him. The book is divided

into four parts with the fourth part devoted to explaining the delivery of messages from God to mankind. It is this part, especially which taught me about the fallacy of the claim by anyone to be able to receive messages from God after the death of the Prophet.

Next is the writer of *Risala*, the book that teaches the religion in very organized, comprehensive and practical form. *Risala* begins by describing every law or ritual and then breaks it down into identifiable components. In this way, one learns about how the religion is practised as well as the laws governing its individual rituals.

Mukhtasar is another book of tremendous value to Islamic learning, and whose author I respect very much. It is an exhaustive summary of the major books of law written within the Maliki School tradition. Many a scholarship has begun and ended studying *Mukhtasar*.

The last of my heroes of African descent is Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio. A particular feat which he achieved was that he was educated in Hausaland and all his teachers were followers of Tariqa brotherhoods. He too grew up with Sufism and even began to write Sufi tracts. But he withdrew from it when he realised its futility as an acceptable philosophy in Islam. Sufism advocates withdrawal from the society and as such, one could not possibly adopt it to build an Islamic state.

55

In these books lie the roots of Gumi's anti-Sufism, an important factor in his later career.⁵⁶

Once he had completed his legal training in Kano in 1947, his first major job was scribe in the Office of the Chief Alkali, the Sokoto headquarters of the native court system. During those years, he made a valuable connection with Ahmadu Bello, who was then on the staff of the NA, but was later to become premier, *Sardauna*, and the most powerful northern politician in the 1950s and during the First Republic. As a scribe, Gumi developed two criticisms that would be

repeated over and over in later years. First, he was opposed to corruption. He regarded the Office of the Chief Alkali as a corrupt institution with little regard for accountability. On one occasion, he rejected a bribe, breaking with established office practice. Second, while the office was meant to ensure that laws were interpreted in strict Islamic terms, Gumi believed that it failed to follow orthodox practice in many cases. His suggestions and advice, although he was learned, were ignored. Just a year into his job, Gumi was already seeking to make changes. Such an opportunity came in mid-1948, when his former school in Kano invited him to come and teach there.

He found Kano to be an ideal place: it enabled him to preach, teach, meet with many Muslims, and practice Islam as he saw fit. But he was only able to spend a few months in Kano before the regional government, trying

to expand schools of education, posted him to the newly-created Maru Elementary Training Center in Sokoto province. He remained at Maru for 18 months, teaching Arabic and Islamic studies. At Maru, he met Aminu Kano, a senior teacher who was to become a legendary radical politician, by then already known for his trenchant criticisms of the British administration. They became neighbors and exchanged ideas. He acted as the school's imam, taking it upon himself to teach all the students how to pray and interpret the Qur'an. His contacts with Shehu Shagari deepened; Shagari visited Maru on several occasions as Inspector of Primary Education.

Gumi's stay in Maru was marked by the discharge of his religious duties. His house became a Qur'anic school for advanced students. Gumi became a household name, not for his classroom work, but for his commitment to his faith. Two issues that brought him notice were his view on ablutions and his ideas about the emir's relationship to colonial authorities. According to Gumi, rather than performing the ritual ablutions prescribed by Islam, many in Sokoto performed the *tayammam*, the sand ablution "permitted only to those who would be sick if they used water, or else if water is not available at the time of saying a particular prayer."

57 Gumi began preaching against this practice, eventually withdrawing all his students from Friday prayers at the Maru central mosque because the imam himself did not perform the required ablutions. In the ensuing controversy, colonial authorities and the sultan warned Gumi to allow the people of Maru to practice their religion the way they chose.

The other issue was more serious. At the end of Ramadan in 1948, the sultan read his customary address to all Muslims. Gumi was annoyed from the opening statement: "I wish to begin by saying my thanks to

the Almighty God and His Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him), to Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio, who strove to establish Islam in our land, and to the King in Britain under whose flag we live in peace and justice." It was the last clause that angered Gumi:

How was it that the British king, the spiritual head of the Anglican Church, could have been placed in the hierarchy mentioned by the sultan? I asked. Besides, was there really peace and justice under the British flag of conquest in Sokoto? It was all wrong and I felt deeply disturbed within. Clearly, the sultan lacked good counsel and this was affecting his public role as a leader of the Muslim community.⁵⁸

Gumi decided to write the sultan, asking why he thanked the British king, "who came to our land to kill off the very values dan Fodio struggled to uphold. Besides, could we under the circumstances actually be said to be

living in peace and justice? After all, has God not stated in the Holy Qur'an that He would never allow unbelievers to triumph over believers, if at all the believers were sincere and steadfast in their belief."

59

On Gumi's account, the sultan was displeased with this letter. Very quickly, the district head compiled a list of accusations against him. Eventually he left Maru on his own, leaving to attend further studies at the School for Arabic Studies in Kano. After another year of study, he received the Higher Elementary Training Certificate, and was retained in his school as a teacher.

While in Kano, he crossed paths again with Aminu Kano, who had by then established a political party, and Gumi was also able to develop relationships with other important people. Gumi and Kano remained in contact until the latter's death in 1983. In 1953, he received a scholarship to undertake advanced studies in teaching at the Bakht er-Ruda Institute of Education, which was affiliated with the University of Khartoum in Sudan, in the company of six others who each became distinguished in his own way. In addition to his education, he was permanently influenced by the Sudanese manner of dress, a simple, functional flowing gown. Taking the advantage of proximity to Saudi Arabia, he made the hajj in 1955. *Sardauna* Bello, now premier, was in Mecca at the same time, and on the spot, he appointed Gumi as imam and guide of all the Nigerian pilgrims.

On returning home, he continued to teach until 1957, when he was appointed pilgrims officer at Jeddah. He was there for nine months, and did so well that Bello proposed to appoint him Nigerian ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Gumi declined the offer in order to stay close to his family and train his children, and he returned to the

classroom in 1958. By now, he had become well-known among Kano politicians and administrators, who sought his advice on a variety of Islamic issues. The Crown Counsel of the state relied on him for the interpretation of Islamic laws.

In 1960, he applied to be a judge in the newly created Northern Regional Sharia Court of Appeal in Kaduna. He was known to members of the interview panel and was quite surprised when they offered him the position of deputy *Grand Khadi*. Nigeria had become independent, the NPC was in control of the region, and Gumi's friend Bello was in power. The Sharia Court of Appeal had been established by the regional government to consider appeals from Native Courts in matters of Islamic personal law and related matters. Within two years, Gumi became the *Grand Khadi*.

Gumi quickly became embroiled in politics. On many occasions he had to meet with the *Sardauna* to discuss volatile regional issues and even particular cases that had been presented before him. He supported attempts to spread Islam in the north and the politicization of religious matters.

When Bello made an official visit to Islamic countries in order to promote international unity, Gumi was part of his entourage. When the World Muslim League was established in 1961, Gumi became a member of the Constitution Council, its governing body. He later played a leading role in the foundation of JNl.

Gumi was a teacher for most of his life. In his later years, he became a source of reference for hundreds of younger Islamic teachers. He believed that teaching should be a priority of Islam, a way for the educated to assist the less fortunate. When he left his formal teaching career, he continued to privately tutor advanced students in his home. In the 1960s, he became a leading Islamic teacher, providing lessons at the Sultan Bello Mosque in Kaduna, close to the *Sardauna's* residence. This was the mosque of the rich and the powerful, and Gumi took great delight in preaching and teaching there. He felt that educating the power elite was an important means of influencing those who could enact societal change. In 1967, his teachings became the subject of regular radio and television programs.

While he understood that Western education was relevant, he believed that Islamic education should never be subordinated to it. He felt that the criticisms of Christians and others who believe that Muslims ought to embrace Western education were wrong and shallow-minded:

Unlike in most other places in this country, there had been quite an established intellectual tradition among the Muslims, dating back several centuries before the coming of the European colonialists. We had an indigenous form of writing and a developed system of education, based on our long association with Arabic and Islamic learning. For a long time our scholars had been involved in advanced scholarship from the Middle East and the Mediterranean, and this had largely influenced the direction of social traditions in our societies. Islam is not a religion that confines itself to acts of worship only; it also covers every aspect of human culture.

He rejected attempts by some to use the West as a point of reference in solving the country's problems:

Many of our problems frequently arise because our vision has been fixed to a horizon well beyond our cultural borders. We are always looking for solutions to problems that bother other nations and working to achieve approval from others according to their set standards, which more often than not conflict with our own needs and values. This to me is worse than any material theft. No person could really claim to be successful unless his own belief, values and needs form the basis for his life's efforts.⁶¹

Like most of the Muslim intelligentsia of his generation, he was hostile to British colonialism, accusing it of bringing destructive consequences and poisoning the minds of the people:

Colonialism had always fought hard to destroy the indigenous basis of our lifestyle in this country. This is on account of the fact that no conquest or domination by a foreigner ever succeed without first undermining the belief and self-confidence of the conquered people. It has often been demonstrated that wherever the colonialists arrived their very first action was to teach about the superiority of their own way of life, usually through emphasising the inferiority of the local culture and uprooting its strongest attributes altogether. One has to be taught about the inadequacy of one's language, food or dress, for instance, before one is made to appreciate the glory of those brought to one by the colonial master. Thus, the key to the success of colonialism everywhere has always been the amount of destruction it could carry out on the way of life of the indigenous people.

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He believed that modern education must include not only the teaching of Islamic religious studies, but also of the Arabic language, which was the only means by which the religion and its holy books could be understood.⁶³

In 1948, he agreed with Aminu Kano that the emirs should not accept knighthoods and other honorifics offered by the colonial British government because they connoted subservience. On another occasion, in 1957, as Nigerian pilgrims were preparing to depart Saudi Arabia and the Nigerian flag was raised, pilgrims from Nigeria and other nations angrily shouted "Zionism!" Gumi explained the reason for this startling outburst:

We had not realised until then that the Nigerian flag consisted of a big white David's Star against green background, with the British crown in the centre. Back at home, we even had David's Star on our currencies and

coins at the time, but did not realise its significance. It was all so humiliating as we put down the flag. I sent it to Tafawa Balewa, with a report of what happened as soon as I came back to Nigeria. I think that helped to change the old design more quickly.⁶⁴

He criticized learned men who failed to impart their knowledge to others. He believed that people must practice what they learn from sacred books.

He agitated for the imposition of al-Shari'a, and for many years he was a leading proponent for its extension across the country. His entire career was devoted to Islamic law and its use. He attributed the decline of al-Shari'a to the British, who had deliberately set out to destroy Islamic culture and law. Once the judicial system was destroyed, Gumi argued, the

destruction of an entire society became a simple matter. British law could not be compared to al-Shari'a, and its use was destructive of social behavior among Muslims. He urged the country to abandon Western laws in preference for al-Shari'a because

in the first instance, it is of great importance to Muslims that Shari'a has come from God and is, therefore, not a product of selfish human interest whether class, sectional or individual. It is a balanced and neutral code by which God wants us to live. To submit to its dictates is to obey God's order, hence it is the most important pillar of worship. Certainly, the Shari'a cannot be compared with any other law made by man, either in scope or orientation.

Secondly, the Shari'a operates on principles of recognition for the supremacy of God and belief in life after death, when all men shall be brought before God to answer for their actions in this world. For me, this is a significant issue specifically in relation to the English Law which lacks any creditable spiritual values. In more than one respect the English Law betrays its European origins, including those pre-Christian "pagan" influences which characterize it, and which are particularly odd in our cultural setting.

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He supported the corporal punishments prescribed in al-Shari'a, including caning and the severing of thieves' limbs, and he believed that al-Shari'a was far more effective in regulating behavior even than preaching. He believed that the military and the Constituent Assembly failed to resolve properly the al-Shari'a issue. He accused opponents of al-Shari'a of being unreasonably fearful and ignorant of Islam. Commenting on the 1978 al-Shari'a crisis, he said that

Christian politicians in particular ran to fearful, and sometimes selfish church leaders, who in turn took over the national media to issue threats and rain insults against everyone they thought was remotely connected

with this alleged plot to "Islamize Nigeria." Soon, "Shari'a became public issue, and was discussed as though it was a grievous wrong. Muslims became subject for late night meetings and undercover manoeuvres. Suddenly, an unofficial war was declared by the Christian clergy, and for a time it appeared as if there was not a crime worse than holding the Islamic faith, even if only in one's mind.

While some of these attacks arose out of genuine ignorance or misunderstanding, however, in most cases they were the product of a deliberate campaign to distort the facts so that some might gain from the situation of instability which could follow.⁶⁶

He did not see how the demand for al-Shari'a could be interpreted as an attempt to Islamize the country. He saw no fairness in a legal system that

denied Muslims their essential right to al-Shari'a and a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal:

How would it harm the Christians, or anyone else for that matter, that a Muslim woman was given the chance to appeal to the Federal Shari'a Appeal Court, in respect of her marriage to a fellow Muslim man? Indeed, would it not amount to a denial of justice if the woman's quest for justice was confined to the state appeal only, without the right of appeal to another court elsewhere? And for how long shall our actions in this country continue to be dictated by sentiment rather than love for fairness and respect for one another?

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He wondered why Christians had failed to respect Muslims and their right to al-Shari'a, and why the critics of al-Shari'a thought that its punishments were harsh. Gumi believed these were all misdirected criticisms based on a deep misunderstanding of al-Shari'a. To those who advocated a reform of Western laws to accommodate elements of al-Shari'a, Gumi replied that this was not only impossible, but insulting.

Gumi was a moralist. He believed that children must be strictly trained, campaigning for an Islamic upbringing of children and for treating women as prescribed in the Qur'an and the other holy books. He condemned flamboyant modes of dress. He opposed corruption, saying that his personal experience had demonstrated that bribes could be rejected. He believed that women should not officiate in mosques or play political roles.

He was opposed to Christianity, believing that Islam would ultimately triumph. Gumi characterized Islam as a divine religion incapable of suppression:

The secret lies in the permanence of its Holy Book, which God Himself

has promised to preserve. Because Islamic laws are permanent and unchanging, each successive generation finds it easy to relate them to its own situation. In that way, the laws remain alive as an everlasting source of inspiration and guidance. This, in effect, is what distinguishes Islam from all other religions.⁶⁸

He said that Christianity was on the decline, and in one remark that received wide publicity, that it was "nothing." He blamed Christianity for northern riots, and he affirmed his hostility to Christians to his dying years:

Indeed, if I do not usually take Christians seriously in this country in matters of faith, it is because there is hardly any platform for discussing our differences. They have simply lost the original essence of their religion. Surely, "the only religion in the sight of God," as the Holy Qur'an has emphasised, "is the religion of Islam."⁶⁹

He did not think that any Christian should be allowed to preside over Nigeria. Should this happen, he said, the country would be irreconcilably divided.

70 He was relentless in advocating an Islamic regime for Nigeria. As he put it in 1987,

Once you accept to be a moslem and you understand Islam, you have to practise the religion. It is not my laws, nor my own invention. You either follow Islamic laws or you violate them. There is no force in Islam. Those who are not moslems will not be forced to obey moslem laws.⁷¹

His negative feelings toward the south were shaped by the intense regionalism of the 1950s, the First Republic, and the coup of 1966 that resulted in the brutal murder of his dear friend the *Sardauna*. The coup remained fresh in his mind through the 1990s, and he read it as evidence of differences in the orientation and expectations of various groups. The differences, he said, centered around "the North-South divide, although to my mind their foundation was religious." In general, Gumi thought that the differences owed to historical backgrounds, with the north having historically been "an economic, administrative and religious bloc."

The north, according to Gumi, was practically a sovereign nation before the British came, having developed an organized bureaucracy and a judiciary strongly united by Islam. Gumi claimed that the British had offered nothing new by way of a political system, that they had only adapted systems already in place. The people were able to retain their culture, and to remain united.

The south, on the other hand, had no similar unity according to Gumi, and it comprised only fragmented city-states with no formal interconnections or central authority. It also lacked a uniform culture

that could confront the British culture. He attacked southern culture thus:

The various gods of the individual communities were no match for the teachings of the white man's religion, particularly since accepting the new faith also brought other rewards in the form of a rise in the people's standard of living. This accounts for the popularity of particular European values among many people in these communities, almost to the point of self-condemnation. Certainly the orientation in Southern Nigeria in general was to copy the white man. Sophistication was measured in terms of how this was achieved, which was why individuals went to great lengths to appear "European," often for want of affirmative cultural support to do otherwise.⁷²

Gumi claimed the south had been historically hostile to all northerners:

It was an established rule that the traders, clerks and other civil servants of Southern origin never mixed with the local people, but always preferred to live either in the GRA or in separate new layouts, the Sabon Gari. In most cases the Sabon Gari areas were provided with good amenities like water, electricity and wide streets, which were denied the older quarters of the city. It took great efforts by the local authorities in places like Sokoto, Maiduguri and Katsina to forbid that. Similarly, Igbo tradesmen controlled economic activities everywhere. They were the main workers in the industrial companies and the shops, and never allowed others to challenge them.

When I was in Kano, one could hardly buy a sack of corn in the market except from an Igbo man, nor could one take one's bicycle to be mended other than to an Igbo mechanic. Nevertheless, the Northerner was always something less than a citizen in his own country. The Northern dress especially was a symbol of conservatism and traditionalism. To wear it in the South was to invite contempt and insult. Traditional virtues like modesty and generosity, with which the Northerner had always been identified, were held as evidence of foolishness and low intelligence. Many a time the Sardauna had been condemned by his adversaries for distributing generous gifts to the public, whereas they themselves accumulated money and bought huge estates and farmlands.

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He believed that northern leaders had been killed by the southern organizers of the 1966 coup because of their commitment to Islam.

Gumi fervently believed that religion and power should not be divorced, theorizing that the emirs lost their power when they began to ignore Islam for the secular world. Had they been what they were supposed to be, scholars promoting the cause of Islam, their influence would have continued to grow and the government, fearful of offending the emirs' followers, would never have tampered with their power. He believed that the only moral guide in life was religion:

Without the corrective force of religion, man would not feel accountable for his own actions, and therefore, would never bother about morality or ethics in his day-to-day relationship with others. Only the fear of God could make one really civilised and enable one to exercise discipline in one's conduct. . . . Today [1992] we cannot claim to be close to solving our national problems any more than we were when we became independent thirty-two years ago. The roots of our instability lie deep in the concept of secularism, which eats away the very cords which should bind us together as a nation.

By divorcing our government from God we are at once encouraging selfishness and unfounded ambitions. The current system does not acknowledge God, which is why we lack direction. Leaders find it easy to lie and cheat and cover up all by resorting to cheap sentiments.

I have made several appeals before for a government founded on religion. Man is not a mindless animal whose only object in life is to eat, mate, sleep and die. Secularism, therefore, as the policy of operating government outside God's control, is alien to civilised human existence. We cannot expect to succeed in our affairs without abiding by the wishes of God, in spirit and in form.

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What Gumi was after was a revolution like the one that overthrew the Shah of Iran in 1978, and he made it clear that he also supported the political demands of Algerian Muslims. He was constantly under attack for his interpretations of Islamic principles. One of the earliest criticisms of his belief came in 1948, when the Maru authorities accused him of observing the Eid prayer separately from others in the school, withdrawing his students from the Friday prayers, and preaching to some people that he was a Mahdi. One of his teachers, Waziri Junaidu, had criticized him for sowing discord at Maru. Later, as a *Grand Khadi* and a leading member of JNI under the First Republic, many of the emirs opposed him out of a suspicion that he was influencing *Sardauna* Bello in order to undermine their authority.⁷⁵ More importantly, he often preached against the emirs outright for not defending the faith and for keeping concubines and slaves. Gumi preached against the Islamic aristocracy, enjoining his followers to refuse to prostrate before the emirs or even to bow to them. Gumi complained fairly equally about fellow-Muslims, Christians in general, and the country in particular.

Archbishop Anthony Olubunmi Okogie

Okogie, who was half Yoruba and half Ishan, was born in Lagos in June 1936. In 1954, having decided to become a priest, he attended St. Theresa's Minor Seminary and the SS. Peter and Paul Major

Seminary, both in Ibadan. In 1963 he traveled to Rome to continue his training. On 4 December 1966, he was ordained to the diaconhood at the Holy Cross Cathedral in Lagos. Thereafter he held the positions of Manager of Schools and Director of Vocations at the Holy Cross Cathedral in Lagos. For a brief period in 1971 and 1972 he was auxiliary bishop of the Oyo Diocese, but in 1973 he was recalled to Lagos and made archbishop, a position he has retained ever since.

O. Williams, secretary-general of the Christian Association of Nigeria, described Okogie as a controversial figure, a truly great leader, and someone who has made "invaluable contributions to the development of

Nigeria, by constantly pricking the conscience of the rulers and by pitching his tent among the suffering and down-trodden masses of our nation. Those contributions will constitute imperishable foot-prints which Archbishop Okogie will leave behind 'on the sands of time.'"

⁷⁶ Many Catholics and CAN members agree with this assessment of Okogie, especially in regard to his radical activities of the 1980s. Rev. Tomori called him a crusader, comparing him with Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr., men who sacrificed their lives for the cause of the poor, love, truth, and justice. Okogie is described as an advocate of the poor, the oppressed and all Christians, "an intelligent activist, who combines sacred and secular functions with manifest proficiency."⁷⁷ He is also considered the most controversial Catholic leader in Nigeria. He believes that truth and love are "the strongest forces in the universe" and that courage, faith, and love of mankind are all that is necessary to overcome injustice.⁷⁸ Tomori concludes that Okogie is the "true prophet of the twentieth century," having the courage of John the Baptist and the perception of a seer.⁷⁹

Regarded as a man of the people, Okogie is thought by his admirers to be humble and kind. He listens to everybody who wants to be heard, and tries to help whenever possible. He once admitted that it is difficult to be happy in Nigeria with all its problems: "the job [of Archbishop] is such that you have to keep thinking all the time of the suffering masses. It is not that I forget the better-off people. But there are so many problems which are far deeper than nationalism. I wonder what can be done to help people out of squalor and unemployment. Where can they go? Government seems unable to help."⁸⁰ When asked why he is interested in politics, he answers is that involvement in politics is the only way to understand "the soul of man."⁸¹ In

Okogie's ideological framework, one must take both religion and politics seriously in order to maintain the balance between body and soul.

Okogie is afraid neither of the military nor of death. Assassins and jailers may come to his door, he says, but he will not be deterred from his chosen path, nor will he change the character of CAN. He explains that courage is one of his watchwords, that "all power is from God, and no man can silence you if God is with you." Defending one's own faith and beliefs irrespective of the consequences are what he values most.⁸²

He attributes his boldness to the fact that he fought on the front lines of the Nigerian Civil War, where he saw Nigerians and foreign missionaries alike sacrifice their lives for the sake of the country.⁸³ Occasionally, he speaks as if he owes those who died during the war a debt of responsibility to work hard to build a strong and united country:

Any time I find something wrong in the whole country, my mind just goes straight to those boys that are dead. It is as if they are sending missiles into me, that "look my friend, you saw us, you saw what we did, it is now up to you." As if we are just appointed by these dead ones to come and champion their cause. We have left this place for you people.

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The experience also taught him that priests must go beyond their church-based liturgical functions and become politically engaged in order to achieve results. Politics, he believes, cannot be separated from religion. Religion must serve practical ends as well as spiritual ones. Christians must be able to reflect on patterns of injustice and commit themselves to the realization of a just society.

He has been described as a "theologian who points the way of rectitude in a situation where injustice is rife. His view is that the interpretation of the Scripture needs to be followed by programmes of action, aimed at uprooting injustice in the society."⁸⁵ Christianity cannot limit itself to the spiritual needs of the people:

The Church should be more concerned to raise the lot of the poor. It is not enough to tell a poor man there is God. He wants you to concretize your concern.⁸⁶

At the same time, however, he demands that Christians be thoroughly committed to their religion. He reminds his followers that they live in a divided society with little or no regard for God, one "imbued with bias and prejudice . . . a society that teaches 'me and mine first.'"⁸⁷ He calls on his followers to respect priests as religious leaders.

Okogie has been involved in the controversies over al-Shari'a, the OIC, and state secularity. In all of these struggles, he has been concerned primarily with protecting the interests of the Catholic Church in particular and Christianity in general, as well as

contributing to the overall development of his country. Underlying most of his speeches are justice, unity, and fair play.

He believes that the government should not interfere in religious affairs. The people should always be free to worship God in any way that appeals to them, and the government should promote cohesion in a religiously heterogeneous society. He calls for state neutrality in religion and for stopping what he perceives as favoritism to Islam. In addition to fighting the issue of political control, he has voiced other demands. In 1991, for instance, he called on the government to establish a National Pilgrims Commission for Christians, saying it was unfair that Muslims had one of their own Pilgrims Commission.

Like all preachers, Okogie condemns moral vice. The elimination of corruption is a major theme in his speeches and writings. In his 1991 New Year's address, he treated government corruption harshly:

Perhaps a problem that has been as devastating to this nation's progress since independence, and which calls for immediate eradication if Nigeria is to survive, is corruption at all levels. This great social vice is now canonized as a virtue. Corruption has greatly led to the slow development of this country. No matter how good and laudable the nation's development programs may be, these programs fall at the execution level because of the greedy few who want to enrich themselves at all costs thereby impoverishing the country and worsening our problems. It is therefore of great concern to us that the nation, so richly blessed, is not making great progress in whatever field one may think of.

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Greed and insincerity, he believes, are the two main reasons for the country's problems.

Okogie laments the state of the economy, complaining about inflation, unemployment and other problems. Speaking out on behalf of the poor in 1991, he said that

it is difficult to confidently say today, that the standard of living of the average Nigerian has improved. Things are going from bad to worse and Nigerians are crying and showing their discontent in hundreds! Shall we wait for the number to grow to thousands by our silence and non-challant attitude to the sufferings of the masses? The irony of course is that the louder the masses cry the less they are heard!⁸⁹

He believes that poverty has led inevitably to crime, and consequently to increased imprisonment of the nation's youth. He condemns the squandering of the country's wealth. He has attacked a number of government policies on human rights, and pleaded for the release of

political prisoners. In his 1991 New Year's sermon he reminded the government of its promise to respect fundamental human rights and civil liberties, which he said they had not done for five years.⁹⁰ He condemned the treatment of prisoners, describing prison facilities as deplorable.⁹¹ He has used his position as a member of the Prerogative of Mercy Committee to visit jails and to call on the government to improve prison conditions.⁹² He worries that the judicial system is unable to check government excesses. The legal system, he says, has lost the confidence of the people:

We have carried out laxity even to the law courts and most of our legal luminaries have allowed themselves to be used by those who pay the piper and consequently dictate the tune. Our legal system should be saved immediately from the clutches of adverse and perverted influence.

Our legal luminaries must remember that they are the last hope of the oppressed and the unfortunate ones in the society. They must remember that they participate in the divine attribute of justice and so must not be respecters of persons.

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He supports a free press, and warns the government not to stifle journalists. He criticizes the military for leading the nation down the path of destruction.

Okogie is active in education as well. As a Catholic priest, he shares the view that education can aid evangelization efforts. But his popularity and his own interests derive not from a narrow missionary agenda, but from concern over the political issue of control over the schools. In the 1970s, with oil revenues flowing in, the Nigerian government was confident that it could fund education at all levels, and many states' missionary schools were nationalized. In Lagos, where the Archdiocese of Lagos controlled a large number schools, Okogie led a fight against government takeovers.

His high-profile political career, in fact, began with this highly publicized opposition to the government takeover of schools and their return to missions and other voluntary agencies. To Okogie, such a takeover would destroy the educational system, undermine the Christian presence, and replace moral training with more superficial ideals. The free education program of the Lagos state government was, to him, a Trojan horse.

He presented numerous arguments for the continuation of missionary

education. In the first place, he said, the nationalization of mission schools violated the rights of parents to choose schools for their children. If the government were to own all the schools, such a choice would be of little effect. Secondly, the right of parents to raise their children in the religious environment of their choice would be constrained by outright government ownership of the entire educational establishment. Catholic parents ought to be free to send their children to Catholic schools, and Muslims ought to have the same right. The commitment of the Catholic Church to a plurality of school systems is, moreover, motivated by a desire to protect itself as an institution:

She [the Catholic Church] encourages the coexistent, and if possible, the cooperation of diverse educational institutions that will allow young people to be formed by value judgements based on specific view of the world and to

be trained to take an active part in the construction of a community through which the building of society itself is promoted.

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Secular schools are badly managed and institutionalize corruption, says Okogie:

We have called the attention of the Government many times to the moral decadence in our society which is now almost at its lowest ebb. The root cause of which is the abysmal fall in our educational standard. Since the so-called "take-over of schools" under the camouflage of "mass education," our Nation has fallen from grace to grass.⁹⁵

Third, educational standards would decline, he argued. Unlike government schools, Catholic schools take character training seriously and consequently attain better academic results. Okogie argues that the country's salvation lies in its schools, tracing most social ills to a decline in educational standards, and characterizing the government system as "mal-education." He has boasted about the role of the Church in effective school management:

When we were proprietors of the schools, we were in a position not only to meet government requirements but to set and achieve the highest standards in the areas of character development. Today that avenue is closed.⁹⁶

Fourth, Okogie and many others argue that Catholic schools are open to rich and poor alike; this is in response to the oft-leveled charge of elitism.

Although Okogie himself is Catholic, he believes strongly in the unity of the entire Christian faith. When Christians are divided, he says, it is difficult to demand and win anything from the government. He wants church leaders to remain united in order to keep their voice and faith strong. He has used his position as the leader of CAN to offer both

spiritual and political leadership. Through CAN, he calls upon church leaders to present a unified platform from which to "confront the misuse of nationalism, to point out the ills of society without fear, to impress upon Nigeria's leaders and would-be politicians that politics and election carry grave responsibilities."⁹⁷

He wants the church to fight as a whole for its members, to demand justice and an end to government favoritism of Islam. In a highly-publicized interview, he urged the church to be "the voice of the voiceless." He further believes that continued conflict with Muslims could degenerate into a chaotic situation from which everyone would emerge a loser.

He calls upon Christians to participate actively in politics. During the Babangida years, when the country was preparing for the Third Repub-

lic, Okogie urged Christians to be particularly active, and that their political motives should be service-oriented:

Politics is not just a means of livelihood, but a vocation to service, inspired by high ideals and social consciousness. Christians have a duty to bridge the yawning gap between the opulent and the impoverished: between the privileged and the down trodden. They should stem the frittering away of the financial and material resources of the nation. For the Christian politician, religion must be the vital force of social control, stability and justice, in the process of nation building. Christians should not go into politics like those of previous years, without some genuine altruistic desire to serve others, to help them with the problems of their material and spiritual life. Nigerian politicians were, in past years, so Machiavellian, that they see politics not as a profession of service, but as a means of securing power of influence over others, or of assuaging personal vanity by becoming a centre of public attention or admiration. For the Christian the factors which should motivate him into politics ought to be a desire to be of service to his fellow men: to ensure that people secure what they are entitled to, that people are treated with the consideration due to them as human beings and that society is so ordered as to create the optimum conditions for human development and for social justice. In other words the Christian politician should see his work as a Christian vocation. Above all, a Christian in politics must be concerned with the quality of the society he is helping to build, with its moral as well as its material standards. This does not mean that he is required to impose the ideals of a particular Church, or indeed of Christianity in general on the people. Rather he is required to consider conscientiously, the impact, on the quality of life, of any changes he makes in the country's laws and practices.

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Not all Christians or Nigerians agree with Okogie's style and beliefs. Some Christians argue that the church and its leaders must remain politically neutral. Those who defend the government's position angrily oppose Okogie, saying that he should limit himself to the

spiritual domain. Okogie's biographer disagrees:

If by this they mean to say that the Church must never pit one group of people against another and must hold to objective standards of social morality that apply to all people and to all occasions without distinction, I whole-heartedly agree with their view. On the other hand, it is essential to keep in mind that whenever the fundamental rights of any particular group, especially, the poor and the underprivileged, are violated or ignored the Church at any cost must come to their defence, even at the risk of being falsely accused of taking sides in a prejudiced manner.

Okogie, to Tomori, follows the model of Jesus Christ in his commitment to justice, human rights, and the liberation of poverty. Okogie also sees himself in this light.

In closing, I want to emphasize that religious leaders like Gumi and Okogie understand the links between religion and politics. Unlike the Nigerian career politicians, whose main concern is making money, religious leaders pose a different question: to what extent are the complications of the present and the unpredictability of the future a partial deviation from the normative and prescriptive visions of the past? The fundamental question raised by their actions is whether there are morally defensible reasons for the involvement of religious leaders in politics. To them, the answer is a resounding yes. Gumi and Okogie are filled with religious fervor for the purpose of sensitizing the nation's public life in all of its manifestations. The problems of Nigerian politics buttress the cynicism of religious leaders and radicalize their religious practices.

5

A Reign of Terror: Violence in Northern Cities, 1980-1985

In 1980, a series of major religious riots broke out in Kano and spread to three states over the course of five years. No less than ten thousand people lost their lives as a result. The original riot lasted from 18 to 29 December 1980 and killed five thousand, although many people remain unaccounted for.

¹ Nearly two years later, a related outbreak occurred on 30 October 1992 at Bulunkutu, near Maiduguri, where another four thousand people were killed, almost two thousand were left homeless, and over three million naira worth of property was destroyed. On the previous day, a riot in Kaduna had killed just twenty-three, but millions of naira in property was lost to the riot there as well. Back in Kano, a church was destroyed on 30 October, along with a great deal of property belonging to Christians.

Aftershocks continued for several years. In Yola and Jimeta, both in Gongola state, riots broke out in late February and early March 1984, with nearly one thousand people losing their lives; those riots resulted in the complete destruction of Jimeta's only modern-day market. Total property damage was estimated at five million naira.² The 1984 Yola riots had all the characteristics of an armed struggle, including guerrilla warfare. The crisis breathed its last gasp on 26 April 1985 in Gombe, killing another hundred. The police exchanged gunfire with the Gombe rioters, and thousands of people abandoned their homes for shelter in army barracks, police stations, and the emir's palace.³

Known as the Maitatsine riots (after the name of Marwa's Islamic

organization), these were the first large-scale religious disturbances in postindependence Nigeria. The riots frightened Muslims and Christians alike. The federal and state governments were naturally concerned by the scale of the violence, but they were deeply shaken by the complete breakdown of law and order. As the nation shook in the aftermath of the crisis, President Shagari set up a Tribunal of Inquiry to investigate the causes of the Maitatsine riots and to recommend ways to prevent similar incidents in the future.

4 In the coming pages I will focus mostly on the 1980 incident, but I will make mention of the others as well.

The Maitatsine violence can be explained as a consequence of Islamic fundamentalism on the one hand, and of the political decadence and economic troubles of the 1970s on the other. The relevance of fundamentalism has been discussed in the introduction to this book, but I stress again that Islam had adequate force to create change whenever the time was ripe. The instigators of the riots tapped into Islam looking for an alternative solution to the decadence and materialism that had infected Nigeria and that they believed endangered Islam itself. In a sense, the rioters were attempting to cleanse society of what they saw as pollution.⁵ Conditions were ripe for an uprising: Islam provided a radicalizing ideology that appealed to a large number of people frustrated by the state's failure to take care of their problems. Leadership in the riots was supplied by a self-declared prophet called Marwa, an Islamic teacher based in Kano. He presented himself as a liberator, connecting with a well-established millenarian tradition and encouraging a religious interpretation for his violent intentions.⁶

The Maitatsine crisis occurred during the Second Republic, against a background of declining revenues, high unemployment rates, political

corruption and rivalries, government mismanagement, rampant materialism, and serious popular concern about the erosion of moral and religious values. Many of these background issues have been discussed in chapter 2, but we will touch upon them again here, as they directly relate to the causes of riots.

One serious problem was the economic decline of the late 1970s and early 1980s that served to fuel the crisis and made it easy for a religious leader to mobilize thousands of people. The country was in debt and badly mismanaged, and environmental disasters drought and desertification among them were reducing the productive capacity of the rural areas. The masses bore the brunt of the economic decline: prices of food soared, building materials became scarce, and jobs were difficult to find. The police and other officers of state took to corruption to augment their salaries. Politicians at the state and federal levels looted the treasuries and flaunted their wealth in public. The poor sought the means to survive. In the north,

many fled from the rural areas to the cities, where they compounded the societal problems and made themselves vulnerable followers for exploitative religious leaders.

In drawing out the connections between this economic decay and the Maitatsine violence, one may invoke both materialist and economic theories. Paul Lubeck argued that the failure to create a semi-industrial capitalist base in Kano was responsible for setting up circumstances conducive to the riots.

7 There is also evidence that most of Marwa's followers were poor and often jobless.⁸ This circumstance encourages an interpretation of the riots as a revolt of the poverty-stricken.⁹

A set of political issues must be added to these economic factors, issues that compounded the crisis as much as they enabled Marwa to flourish. To start with, many cities lacked moral or traditional authorities to check irresponsible religious leaders. Traditional chiefs and community leaders had lost the regulatory power that they had previously exercised to prevent the clergy from inciting major crises.

But the largest political issue was the degeneracy associated with the party politics of the Second Republic. Matthew Kukah has pointed attention to the "limitations of the political exigencies of the time. . . . It was the political system that produced him and his followers [the Maitatsine]. That he had mobilized so many followers was a testimony of the failure of the political system and the recklessness of the operators."¹⁰ Kukah does overdramatize these linkages to some extent. There is limited evidence to suggest that Marwa's actions were made possible by the politics of the Second Republic, but there is also conclusive evidence that the politics of the time shaped some of the outcome of the events. The state's failure to check the Marwa

movement's growth and to arrest its leader, for instance, owed to political laxity and power rivalries among politicians and security agents. A perceptive police officer observed in 1980 that in spite of the problems that Marwa posed, "every efforts to rid them had up to date proved negative due to political bubble in the state."¹¹ When a motion was tabled in the Kano State House of Assembly to regulate dangerous public preaching, it was defeated on the grounds that it was preachers who had made it possible for many Assembly members to be elected in the first place, and they should not be betrayed. Chief Awolowo, the leader of the UPN who had a strong southern constituency, was also mentioned as a possible sponsor of the violence. He was said to have boasted that he would bring down the federal government. As his political enemy S. G. Ikoku argued before the Tribunal, to bring down a government would take foreign support, and only the Israelis, with whom Ikoku said Awolowo was friendly, would agree to such

a collaboration. Ikoku alleged that it was through Israel and Awolowo that the Maitatsine could have obtained advanced weapons.

12 As it turned out, no such advanced weapons could be found, let alone any evidence of external involvement. But in the murky political waters of the Second Republic, the allegation was all that mattered.

As an intelligent person, Marwa was no doubt aware of the many political problems and the fact that they were ripe for exploitation. He certainly knew that politicians could be manipulated, that his activities would be interpreted as religious, that he had the right to preach, and that there were many other preachers within the city competing for followers and attention. If the members of the Kano State House of Assembly believed that they benefited from the votes handed to them by the preachers, it could also be expected that the preachers themselves, as astute religious leaders, were aware of their political role in influencing the course of elections, that elected officials were very vulnerable, and that the politicians lacked the authoritarianism of the military.

The riots came at a time when the PRP government had already been weakened and fractionalized by internal wrangling to the point that it was unable to respond effectively to any political crisis. As Matthew Kukah argues, if the PRP had been strong, and if there had been some kind of understanding between the emir and the party, perhaps the violence would never have occurred. In the context of the power rivalry of the time, Marwa was a useful pawn for the narrow interests of the NPN and perhaps the emir, both of whom welcomed the irritation Marwa caused the PRP. While the emir probably could have called Marwa and his followers to order, he failed to do so because the PRP had worked tirelessly to undermine his power. The NPN

welcomed the violence at first because it clearly demonstrated that its rival, the PRP, was powerless to stop it, and the NPN hoped that the tension would further erode the PRP's credibility and popular support. Indeed, when the Kano State Police Commissioner requested additional support from his superiors in Lagos, Sunday Adewusi, a well-known NPN member, denied the request, hoping to expose the PRP to danger and ridicule. But Governor Abubakar Rimi of the PRP was no amateur at politics. Either because he knew he was weakened by the crisis in his party or because he understood the game that the emir and the NPN were playing, he decided to play soft with Marwa. Rimi not only did not antagonize Marwa, but he made subtle moves to associate with him. Shortly before the riots, seeking to find a peaceful way to check Marwa, Rimi invited him to the state house. Although Marwa declined the invitation, he sent three emissaries with whom the governor ate and prayed. This strategy reflected

the politics of the time; in better times, Marwa would have been identified as a security risk and his movements would have been monitored. Even those who had negative information about him, like the National Security Organization (NSO), refused to share it with other agencies, partly because of bureaucratic inefficiency and partly because of personal rivalries among political appointees in the agencies.

The Maitatsine

Because many members of the Maitatsine, including Marwa himself, were killed, and because the survivors were dispersed and stigmatized as the enemies of the state, it is difficult indeed to reconstruct an insider's perspective on the movement and its aims. When I journeyed to the region for fieldwork in 1990, it was difficult to find people who would admit to having been members of the sect, not just because of their suspicion of outsiders, but also because the Maitatsine sect had been condemned by the local population as heretical. What they stood for, the political objectives they pursued, and the chain of authority in the movement after Marwa's death have all been subjects of speculation. Even the name of the sect is variously interpreted to mean "God forbid," "the faithful," "the believer," or "the reformer," and no sect leader can be dug up and pressed for clarification.

One issue is clear above all: the Maitatsine were different from other Islamic groups in the way they defined themselves and their allegiance. The founder was a preacher, known as Marwa, alias Maitatsine, but also variously called Muhammadu Marwa, Muhammadu Mai Tabsiri, Marwa Darka, Muhammadu Arab, and Muhammadu Allah Tatsine.

13 Whether these names stand for different identities or symbols, no one knows. Here we shall refer to the leader as Marwa and the

movement as the Maitatsine. Marwa was an enigmatic character, whose image has become mysticized by both his followers and his enemies. He apparently had an impressive ability to travel far and wide, to evade security networks, and to mobilize thousands of people. His physical description is nothing but ordinary: a slender man, 1.7 meters tall, bearded, with two gold-plated incisor teeth in his upper jaw.

Marwa's ability to create an army of followers was a source of envy to many '*ulama*'.¹⁴ Marwa did what all '*ulama*' were accustomed to doing: preached, identified with a sect and doctrine, and recruited followers. As chapter 9 indicates, intergroup rivalries are usually very intense. Marwa, behaving like a charismatic *tariqa* leader, was a source of inspiration to his followers and promised the true path to Allah and salvation. *Tariqa* leaders

compete, struggling for followers and fighting over doctrines. Clashes are common among them. Because each leader tries to be distinctive, he creates a highly individual doctrine and identity that sometimes contrasts sharply with those of others. The state has been unable to devise a strategy for successfully dealing with competition among *tariqa* leaders and preventing public clashes.

The Maitatsine, of course, did not create the Islamic religion from scratch. Marwa drew on an established religious tradition and created a doctrine and an interpretation of his own. In creating a following, he did what any '*ulama* would do: he relied on the well-established *Almanjiri* system, which is described below. The ranks of his followers swelled, as did those of his colleagues and of the politicians. He was popular not just because of his appeal, but because there were people who recruited followers to his movement. Economic conditions also pushed many people away from rural areas to urban centers, and a high unemployment rate forced thousands of young men to seek alternative means of survival. This last point will become important to our analysis.

Marwa was no stranger to religious circles in Kano. He arrived in the city around 1945 to begin a career as a missionary. But he became so strange and cantankerous that he was arrested and prosecuted in 1962. He was jailed for three years and deported to his home town of Marwa in Cameroon. How he managed to reenter Kano and reestablish himself remains a mystery. He was said to have returned to Kano around 1966, a time of political crisis in Kano and all Nigeria. The Kano authorities did not respond to his violation of the deportation order. On 9 December 1966, he was again arrested, this time for preaching without a permit, and remained in custody for a month. No charges were filed against him, and he was released.

From 1972 until his death in 1980, Marwa was in constant

confrontation with the police because of the activities his preaching incited in his followers. A few members of his sect who were willing to talk said that Marwa's preachings were not meant to provoke fights, but to strengthen the commitment of the Maitatsine to their faith and to appeal to prospective members to leave the rival Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya brotherhoods. The Maitatsine gathered in four areas in the city, the Kofar Wambai, Koko, Shahuci, and Yan Awaki, where they could meet without being disturbed by rival groups. On 4 August 1972, about a thousand of his followers were accused of throwing stones at the police. When a police officer went to investigate the matter, he too was attacked. Sixty-four of Marwa's followers were later arrested and indicted, but Marwa somehow escaped arrest.

A year later, Marwa was arrested and sent to the Makurdi prison. He

was soon released and rearrested in Kano, once again for illegal preaching, in 1973. Two years later he was again arrested and detained, and he was again released. The next Maitatsine brush with the law did not happen until four years later, when in 1979 many of his followers were arrested and prosecuted for causing trouble in the city. After having overcome a series of arrests and incidents of police harassment, Marwa likely believed that no authority could hold him down, a fact that perhaps explains the contempt he demonstrated for the police and even for the state governor, whose 1980 invitation he would decline.

It was probably during the 1970s that he acquired the nickname of Maitatsine, translated by one informant as "the one who knows how to curse" for his acidic language, combative posture, and favorite Qur'anic passages. He was a Qur'anic teacher and preacher. Forceful, persuasive, and charismatic, he rebelled against many popular opinions among Kano Islamic circles, denouncing certain parts of the Holy Qur'an and even criticizing the Prophet Muhammad. At one stage in his career, Marwa granted himself his most prestigious credential when he revealed himself to be an *anabi*, a prophet with divine power and a mission to save the world. Many of his disciples believed that he was indeed a prophet. He was alleged to have replaced the name of the Prophet Muhammad with his own in personal copies of the Qur'an.

15 Many of his followers prayed in his name, deriding the Prophet Muhammad as an Arab.¹⁶ Testifying before the Tribunal, one of his wives said that she believed Marwa was a prophet and that she approved of his conduct and actions because the Prophet Muhammad did similar things in Medina.

He had mallams under him who worked to recruit other disciples from

far and wide. By 1975, he had over two thousand followers. Five years later, he had tripled that figure in his home base of Kano alone, with sizable followings as far away as Bauchi, Maiduguri, and Yola. Estimates of the total number of Maitatsine range from eight to twelve thousand, and according to one of his wives, his following increased in 1980.¹⁷ This was perhaps a reflection of the time's economic decline as much as it was of the force of Marwa's charisma.

He was opposed to most aspects of modernization and to all Western influence. He decried such technological commonplaces as radios, wrist-watches, automobiles, motorcycles, and even bicycles. Those who used these things or who read books other than the Qur'an were viewed as hell-bound "pagans". Marwa attacked Western education, describing as "pagans" those who sent their children to modern schools; he also came down against affluence, saying that the well-heeled were infidels. Marwa's anti-Western

campaigns were not unusual. As I indicate also in chapters 2 and 8, Islamic preachers are not united in their views on the West and technology. His message appealed to the poor, who had neither access to state power and resources nor sufficient income to acquire modern possessions. Moreover, they were victims of state mismanagement, and even of exploitation.

While Marwa was certainly not the only anti-Western Muslim, he seemed to have carried his beliefs to unprecedented lengths. Kano is a sprawling city in which it is difficult to move from one point to another without relying on a modern transport system. But Marwa's followers would walk enormous distances to demonstrate that buses was unnecessary.

18 Many parents aspired to give their children a Western education without denying them the opportunity to learn about Islam and to become Muslims. But Marwa's antimaterialist ideology seems a powerful strategy indeed in light of the fact that he built his following from the ranks of the rural poor and the marginalized urban classes. Not only was he able to create in them a new vision of life, but he also succeeded in de-emphasizing those things to which his followers would not have access. He focused their lives for them, redirecting them away from the expensive objects of city life to a simple, inexpensive, spiritually oriented lifestyle. Lacking property and the means to acquire, living in a society where the gap between rich and poor was wide, and having been brought up in conditions of poverty, his followers were vastly impressed by a worldview opposed to elitism and materialism.

His religious practice was based on an admixture of Islam and sorcery. He engaged in all sorts of ritual practices, and he interpreted the Qur'an in idiosyncratic ways. Marwa felt that the practices of saying

the *Allahu akbar* in prayer and reading *Taita* or saying *Atahiyat rak ataine* after prayer, both extremely common practices, were paganistic. Marwa condemned many other traditional aspects of Islam, including those that many regard as lying at the core of Islam. He disagreed with a number of principles set forth in the Qur'an and the *sunna*, and he also criticized some statements of the Prophet Muhammad. In declaring himself a prophet he alienated himself from all mainstream Muslims, who believe that the Prophet Muhammad was God's final prophet. For attacking the Prophet Muhammad, questioning the Qur'an, doctoring the liturgy, and calling himself a prophet, he never would have been called an '*ulama* by a normal Muslim, and, in fact, one notable imam called him a lunatic.¹⁹

His messages were radical and phrased in provocative language, and he was known outside his sect as the "owner of the curse." He opposed the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhoods, describing their members as infidels. To them and to other Muslims he would say *Wanda bata yarda ba*

Allah ta Tchinemay Allah curse he who disagrees with His version. One observer summarized differences between the Maitatsine and mainstream Muslims thus:

They pray while counting their beads, five times a day, facing the East, but think Prophet Mohammad was not a breathing image of Allah. They read the Koran but don't see the need to visit Mecca. . . . The Maitatsines unlike the "other" moslems don't put off their shoes when they enter mosques or offices. Like the "other" moslems the Maitatsines eat cattle meat. Unlike the "other" moslems, they meet at the open market, and the cattle meat must be slaughtered by a member of the Maitatsine group. . . . At worship the "other" moslems in supplication to the Deity, place their open arms, facing away from themselves, in upright positions, on the sides of both ears. But the Maitatsines, in prayer, rest the open palms of both hands on their chest. . . . The Maitatsines preach a strong compulsion to kill. They believe that if they are able to kill "Arnas" (infidels) who don't believe in Allah, they will go to heaven.

20

The Maitatsine preferred to depict themselves otherwise. They carried posters of the Ayatollah Khomeini and Muammar Khaddafi, indicating that they accepted these two as model political reformers the *Mujaddid* of the very kind that Nigeria needed. They were very active in preaching Islam. Many described themselves as itinerant preachers with a commitment to convert people to their own beliefs. In addition to their theology, they developed a community with a distinct identity. Members shaved their heads, wore Arabic-inscribed charms and amulets on their waists and ankles, and tattooed their stomachs.²¹ They were opposed to other Islamic groups.

Marwa segregated his followers from the rest of society. He chose a neighborhood, 271 Kofar Wambai in the Yan Awaki quarters, that was separated from nearby houses by a stream. The neighborhood was in a

new part of the city that had many uncompleted buildings. The topography of the enclave was unfavorable to a police raid, protected by the stream and located on high ground from where incoming enemies could be observed.

Marwa gradually pushed out his neighborhood residents to give his enclave room to grow. By 1980, eight homeowners had been displaced. He expanded his house to accommodate more followers and to strengthen his security. The expansion was not authorized by the local planning authority, but despite the facts that he was breaking the law, that he did not even own the land on which he was building, and that he was impeding the area's drainage system, they were afraid to do anything about his construction

activities. Marwa also encouraged his followers to build additional shelters on nearby vacant plots that did not belong to them.

The Maitatsine received physical and military training from sect members who had served in the police or army. Saidu Rabi'u, a trusted lieutenant of Marwa, was in charge of the training program. Rabi'u was feared for his brutality to enemies, some of whom he had killed in the Maitatsine enclave. Marwa himself had two bodyguards, Aliyu Isa of Lokoja and Ayuba Gaya of Tsaida. Both were well trained and loyal to Marwa. Against the possibility that the police might launch a surprise attack, the Maitatsine were armed at all public functions, with bodyguards protecting Marwa and Maitatsine soldiers sprinkled among the audience.

The Maitatsine were trained in the use of bows and arrows,

22 and members of the sect armed themselves at all times with swords, daggers, cutlasses, spears, iron rods, Dane guns, double-barreled rifles, machetes with scabbards, and heavy-headed clubs fitted with axes, choppers, and metal hooks.²³ From the way they conducted surprise attacks on the police and the public, it was clear that they understood strategies suitable to their needs. It was also clear that they were able to disguise themselves as innocent civilians in public when, in fact, they were always fully armed and prepared to fight. The Maitatsine were not afraid of modern weapons. Marwa was able to convince his followers that his charms and prayers were powerful sources of protection, which gave them unusual courage and readiness to fight. Marwa would recite verses like this one to embolden his followers:

Allah will defend you against them;
 Destroy them with the wish of Allah
 Don't you see how the Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant

Didn't Almighty put their intention to destruction and stray?
And the birds were sent on them which threw on them stones from fire
and were left like burnt stalks.²⁴

Their worldview trivialized death: they were not property-conscious, did not worry about those who would be left behind, and their deaths would not cause anyone hardship. The hereafter was trouble-free and non-materialistic, something to which they all looked forward.

The headquarters of the Maitatsine was both a spiritual center and a fortress. Popular rumors held that it contained a fortified bunker for Marwa, an escape tunnel, and an enormous arsenal. After the Maitatsine were defeated by the army, the enclave's secrets were penetrated, although the quantity of their weapons and their methods of defense remained unknown.

The members of the Tribunal visited the place and reported their firsthand observation as follows:

We inspected the backyard of one of the buildings backing a stream. The wall overlooking the stream had an aperture which was blood-stained. This was the posterior part of the building which was called the "slaughter-house" so named because it was in this house that unfortunate victims were killed and thrown into the stream behind. A shallow grave was partly uncovered and revealed the corpse of an unidentified person. The enclave is behind the Kofar Wambai Primary School but from the top of the school one could easily see where Maitatsine lived despite all the obstacles with which he sheltered himself. To reach him from the school side would have been a tremendous task, having regard to the series of walls he had erected in segments in front of his house. The "slaughter-house" was sealed off but we subsequently made a second visit. . . . [It was] a one-storey building with ten rooms (five on each side) but with no exit room, as a result of which once one entered into the backyard, there was no exit except through the only door at the main entrance into the house. A person held against his will at the backyard in which was the slaughter house was indeed in a maximum security prison.

These backyard rooms were littered with implements but two of the rooms—one underneath the storey building and another the last out-house room which appeared to serve as a shower room with a shower pipe and turret installed, deserve special mention. A little opening for water to run out was made underneath one wall facing the stream behind. The walls of this bathroom were awash with blood. Streaks of dry blood ran down the walls; the floor was blood stained and smeared. Bodies were thrown into the stream from this room.

An 18-inch skirt of two walls in one of the rooms in the forefront of the building was printed with countless numbers of finger-marked comma-shaped expressions which . . . were made with human blood. . . . The Police insisted that each large comma represented one person done to death. If that was the case, the number of persons done to death in the "slaughter house" must have run to hundreds.

The membership of the Maitatsine included both young and old people, men and women with little or no formal Western education. While the membership was dominated by Nigerians, there were also people from Niger Republic, Chad, Cameroon, Mali, Upper Volta, and Sudan. The number of foreigners in the movement was exaggerated in a 1982 report by the federal government as part of an attempt to blame the violence on foreigners. By the time the government-sponsored Tribunal completed its investigation, it had discovered evidence of only 185 foreigners.²⁶

Many members described themselves as *almajiri*, or catechumens; Marwa must have appealed to them as a teacher and leader. Many Islamic preachers and leaders rely on the *almajiri* system for recruitment. This is an established practice under which young boys attach themselves to a Qur'anic teacher to learn about Islam and to receive sufficient instruction in Arabic to be able to read the holy books. Many of these boys are allowed to leave their parents and to even travel great distances to learn. Marwa had many such boys, ranging in age from 10 to 14, who had been brought to him by elderly people or even by their parents. The system allowed for indoctrination into particular beliefs and loyalty to a leader, who became a father figure.

As the Tribunal and others observed, it had become far easier for preachers in the cities to recruit followers because of the weakness of the Nigerian economy. The Tribunal was right to note the rural-urban migrations of the 1970s and 1980s, which occurred due to insufficient opportunities in the rural areas. Unemployed young men and those who had finished harvesting their crops flocked to the cities in search of alternative employment. Many were disappointed and became available for recruitment into all sorts of legitimate and illegitimate organizations. Marwa was able to tap this reservoir. Some were drawn to him directly by his preachings. Others were recruited by his followers, who sought new members in parking lots, railway stations, and other public places. To these homeless and poor migrants Marwa provided shelter, security, and alternative ways of negotiating the city. This shrewd recruitment strategy was enormously successful.

In spite of Marwa's style and record, he was able to operate successfully for many years and to maintain his hold on his followers. He made his money from consulting and from selling charms, and he numbered politicians among his clients. Governor Rimi was alleged to have given him substantial amounts of money on two occasions,

perhaps as an attempt to buy support.

His large army of followers had to be taken care of. Shelter was free in houses that they built or squatted in, and because they panhandled, their needs were small. The *almajiri* were permitted by law to beg in mosques, street corners, and roads, keeping part of the proceeds and surrendering a portion to their leader. This system was partly responsible for the corruption of the *almajiri* tradition in the 1970s, because many preachers exploited young children for money. The more *almajiri* one had, the more money could be made. Weekly levies were imposed on children whose parents could pay. Other children, they sent to the streets to beg for money, which they would bring back to the preacher. One of Marwa's wives told

the Tribunal that her husband made an average of two hundred naira a day from the panhandling of his *almajiri*.

27

Marwa's critics found his motives vague. Was he a reformer? It would appear so, at least judging from his doctrine. Was he interested in politics? As a leader of a large following, he certainly had impressive political skill. There is no evidence that he wanted to rule Nigeria or Kano State, as some have alleged. Some critics, including members of the Tribunal, believed that he was certainly interested in controlling the people of Kano, and in ascending from there to a position of national power. The Tribunal provided no evidence for this conclusion; it simply interpreted his attempts to capture the market, the Central Mosque, the police station, and other places as politically motivated. What his real political motives were may never be known.

The sect's realization that the public and the government had become antagonistic to it not only strengthened cooperation among its members, but also set it on the path toward violence: the Maitatsine decided that those who did not embrace their doctrine or Islamic practices had to be eliminated in order to preserve the faith. The sect had become popularly associated with violence by the late 1970s. They were hostile to nonmembers, whom they harassed or even kidnapped. The Maitatsine were known to have raped and killed innocent people. Their targets included Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In 1979, the Assistant Director of the National Security Organization wrote to the Commissioner of Police in Kano to report that a number of mallams including Marwa were preaching without permission in a way that was likely to spark religious trouble among different sects.

The Violence

The Maitatsine envisioned the riots as a jihad, as the end-product of their struggles. They had received training and were psychologically prepared for war. They had acquired a variety of weapons and composed war slogans to embolden themselves. They were certainly not afraid of death or of the police. A revealing piece of evidence is the inscription on the body of Saidu Rabi'u, the military leader of the Maitatsine:

If I were cut into pieces and I die, I will come back to life again. . . . I prefer to die than to live in this world. . . . If I die, animosity ends, madness ends. At the time I am dead, I am dead, but I will return to this world a second time.²⁸

In the months preceding the great battle of 8 December, tension had been building between the sect and the public. Police and state authorities were aware of the peculiar character of Marwa and his preachings. Marwa and his followers had built a state within a state, daring the police to arrest them. On many occasions, they lashed out physically at policemen trying to arrest a member of the sect. Passers-by were harassed, the area was off limits to the police, and children were often prevented from getting to school. On 27 October 1980, the police department instructed officers in Kano to avoid Yan Awaki quarters. The Nigerian Security Organization told its agents that it was too dangerous to do any undercover work in the area. The police commander dispatched a telegram to Lagos:

Religious fanatics numbering about 2,000 occupied Yan Awaki Quarters in Kano city. They are largely non-Nigerians from Cameroun. They do not obey any law. When any member is arrested and charged to Court, they will not attend. Kano Municipal Development Board served quit notices on them but they did not obey. House of Assembly summoned the leader Muhammadu Marwa four times for discussion but did not attend. They constitute their area into a private republic not accessible to other people.

29

The neighborhood's ward head was also afraid of the Maitatsine compound. Because of the state's failure to curb their activities, the majority of the members of the sect had come to believe that the state was powerless to deal with them. They also believed that their charms would counteract any modern weaponry brought against them.

Hardly a week went by in 1980 without someone complaining about the Maitatsine. The police, too, had clashes with Marwa. On 2 April 1980, one incident resulted in the death of two Maitatsine and injuries to three policemen. On 27 May, the Maitatsine clashed with another

religious sect and seven people were injured. Three days later, twenty-nine people were arrested for disturbing the peace. Between April and October of the same year, the police pressed eleven cases against the Maitatsine, mostly on charges of assault and preaching without a permit. In October, the Maitatsine beat and wounded twelve policemen, and successfully resisted a police attack on their base.³⁰ Two months before the sudden and devastating violence, the NSO reported to the government that:

on 23rd October, 1980 at about 1800 hours at Yan Awaki Quarters, Fagge Kano about one thousand thugs and fanatics belonging to a muslim organization known as the "Izala" all armed with some dangerous missiles attacked and killed one Special Constable, Sani, Alhaji Yusuf and also wounded three

other constables seriously. The incident occurred when the thugs barricaded all roads leading to their leader's house, Muhammadu Marwa and started throwing stones, bows and arrows on people passing through the area. Following a tip-off some Policemen were sent from a nearby Police Station to the scene but they were over-powered by the thugs who stabbed the Special Constable to death. A unit of anti-riot police reinforcement drafted to the scene from the Police Headquarters were also over-powered by the thugs who wounded three Constables and also seized one tear-gas gun from the Police.

As at now, in spite of public demand for the Government to use all reasonable force to dislodge the thugs and also to bring to book their leader, Marwa, who is believed to be a Camerounian and had been causing trouble in the area for long time, nothing seems to have been done to check his religious vandalism and hooliganism. The generality of the people in the state therefore feel surprised that such a person is allowed to take the law into his hands at the detriment of peace in the state.

31

By 1980, Marwa had become "a stormy petrel in Kano society and generally among Muslims."³²

Early in 1980, Baba Yaro, a legislator, moved that the House of Assembly curb abusive religious preachings, following numerous public complaints about Marwa and others. The motion had no popular support. In April 1980, the Secretary to the Kano Municipal Local Government advised the Kano state government to do something about Marwa and his "illegal preaching":

The way and manner the preaching is being conducted is not acceptable to the majority of our people as it is a total condemnation of the principles of Islam as accepted and practised by the Moslems. The fanatic had gone to the extent of arming his lieutenants with knives and other deadly weapons. He has in fact built an empire. . . . In view of the fact that whenever this Mallam and his aides preach, tension gathers momentum, it has therefore

been necessary for the government to do something about it.³³

A few police officers privately warned the government that greater trouble was ahead. In October 1980, the police commissioner in Kano requested three additional mobile units from the police headquarters in Lagos to suppress Marwa. In the last week of November, he repeated the request and asked for permission to use force. Lagos denied both requests, instructing the commissioner that force should not be used and that the matter should be taken to court. The Lagos chief later admitted that he had thought Kano was exaggerating the situation and was only acting under political pressure from the PRP.

All these warning signs were ignored by the state, and the Maitatsine gained valuable experience in confronting the police. Even the governor was advised by security operatives to deport Marwa, but he, too, failed to act. By November, complaints had mounted further, forcing the governor to write a letter to Marwa on 26 November 1980 that gave him two weeks to demolish his illegal structures and to vacate the compound.

34 While the governor sounded tough in the letter, he undermined his own authority by secretly telling Marwa that he could ignore the letter's contents if he would engage in a dialogue with him. Marwa refused either to see the governor in person or to comply with the instructions in the letter. Rather, he informed all his members that they had been threatened and asked to vacate their homes. He sent for all his followers in the country to come to Kano to defend their leader and faith. He consolidated his defense base, prepared his followers for war, and stepped up Maitatsine harassment of the public. Marwa had become a warlord. Adewusi, the police boss, would later testify before the Tribunal that "one could safely say that they had declared their own independent country within the enclave," an enclave beyond the jurisdiction of all arms of the government.³⁵

There are at least three factors that made it difficult to handle Marwa. First of all, as I have already pointed out, the petty political struggles among the politicians and their parties came at the expense of law and order. Second, state security forces were too afraid of the Maitatsine to be effective. The police openly admitted their fear of the movement. According to the police, no order had ever come down to arrest Marwa, or to destroy his sect. The rank and file of the police thought that Marwa was invincible. The chief of police, too, confessed that he believed that it was impracticable to arrest him because he had

too many followers with the mystical power to withstand bullets.³⁶ Having constructed such a myth about Marwa, it was difficult to check his excesses; their confrontations with him were from a position of weakness, and trepidation. As the Tribunal noted, the police commander in Kano "totally succumbed to the permanent existence of the threat . . . believed to be beyond suppression. It was a case of total surrender to an overwhelming situation."³⁷ Third, Marwa's strength was formidable compared to that of the police. Marwa's men outnumbered the police force. His large following had better morale and well-defined goals, and they were clearly defiant of the state. It was also possible, as many alleged, that the secrets of government and police plans were leaked to the sect by sympathetic insiders, allowing Marwa to anticipate the government's major moves and to prepare an adequate response in advance.

By December, rumors were spreading that the Maitatsine wanted to

expand their activities by taking over the Fagge market and the Central Mosque, where Maitatsine members would be installed as imams. By that time, no non-Maitatsine were left in the Yan Awaki neighborhood. Marwa had become distrustful of all government functionaries. He protected himself securely, expecting a police attack at any time. Around-the-clock surveillance kept watch on his house and his movements. One renegade member of the sect said that Marwa lost his son, Tijani, a loss which brought him considerable sorrow and pain, and the Tribunal was led to believe that Tijani's death made Marwa more hostile, restless, brutal, aggressive and vengeful. He "felt that every other father should share the same sorrow as himself, and was reported to have slaughtered children indiscriminately in consequence."

38

On 8 December the Maitatsine went to the Shahuci Playing Ground in Kano to preach, with their leader in attendance. Shahuci had become their regular meeting place. It is a large area of about twelve acres, close to the City Central Mosque and the Emir's Palace. Large crowds were easily accommodated. According to the police, the public had complained that such gatherings of the sect led frequently to violence. By this time, the police were determined to put an end to the sect's public demonstrations. The Maitatsine felt that the police had neither the right nor the strength to stop them, and they were in any event prepared for any confrontation that might ensue. Police accounts of the first encounter, say that two of their units occupied Shahuci in order to prevent the event from taking place. As the Maitatsine appeared, the police discharged smoke shells to scare them off, but sect members suddenly appeared from every side and attacked the police with machetes, arrows, swords, daggers, and other deadly weapons. Shouts of "kafri" (infidels) filled the air. The police opened

fire, but the Maitatsine did not flinch at the gunfire. They surged forward, and the police immediately lost control of the situation. They were outnumbered and overpowered. All thirteen of their vehicles were burned, they were stripped of their weapons, and four officers were killed. Thirteen officers were badly injured, and the rest of the policemen ran like helpless victims.³⁹ The 150-man police force had badly underestimated the Maitatsine sect's power, morale, and resources, but more importantly, they had never suspected that they would be outnumbered twenty to one by this heavily armed group. The police lost countless Berettas, tear gas grenades, hand saws, and bullets to the Maitatsine.

Panic spread through Kano. The confrontation had emboldened the Maitatsine and enraged and humiliated the police. In one day, what should have ended as a small commotion had become a civil war. The Maitatsine

decided that the opportunity was ripe for a mass attack. In jubilation, they chanted war songs, their favorite being "Yau Zamu Sha Jini" ("Today we will suck blood). They paraded their captured police rifles and uniforms around the city, terrorizing the public and working themselves up. They attacked Muslims unsympathetic to their cause and symbols of the state, capitalism, the West, and Christianity. A rampage ensued and war erupted for eleven days. On 19 December, the Maitatsine wreaked havoc over the whole city, seizing the Fagge mosque and the police station, attacking the police, school buildings, and even young schoolchildren. They took over the Sabuwar Kofar and Kofar Wambai Primary Schools, forced the students and staff out, and killed at least three pupils. They raided markets and market stalls. By the next day, eight more police officers had been slaughtered and several police vehicles damaged. Members of the public were attacked randomly, women were raped, children were murdered, houses were burned, and shops were looted. By 21 December, the police were borrowing weapons from the army's arsenal and were still unable to get a leg up on the Maitatsine. The police had lost their morale, and many officers failed even to report for duty. Police stations were deserted, and the city of Kano was in a state of anarchy. Military officers began to compare the situation's intensity with that of the civil war in the 1960s. Members of the sect rushed to Kano from Jos, Sokoto, and other places to participate in the violence.

40

It became clear that the police were entirely unprepared to handle the escalating crisis. They had no knowledge of the extent of their fortifications, tactics, strength, outside support, level of preparation, and staunch determination to die for their beliefs. The Maitatsine were bold warriorsthey were not trained to hit and run, observed Major Halilu Hakilu, the intelligence officer in charge of the sect: "their

tactics are bolder than the guerrillas we read about fighting in Malaysia or in the jungles of East Asia. In fact, we have found that their tactics was to kill and destroy."⁴¹ More people were killed, the city ground to a halt, and the Maitatsine could not be dislodged. They destroyed buildings and cars, blocked traffic, seized the Sabongari market (the biggest in the city) and the abattoir, from which they stole all the available cattle. The Maitatsine occupied additional sites in the city, including a large movie theater, as shelters and as bases from which they could launch further attacks.⁴²

President Shagari, seeking to put an immediate end to the conflict, called in the army on 28 December. Within two days, the army had destroyed the Maitatsine base and restored some degree of peace in Kano.

The Maitatsine fought with a gallantry that caused even Colonel Y.Y. Kure, the commanding officer of the military operation, to commend them:

I pray that Nigerians would be able to fight for this nation in the same manner as the fanatics fought in the event of an attack on Nigeria.

43

While many members of the sect were killed, including Marwa, others escaped with the corpses of their comrades. They dug four mass graves for their dead. The police were able to get hold of the body of Marwa, which was later cremated in order to prevent his followers from turning his burial site into a shrine and "a source of recrudescence of violence in Kano."⁴⁴ Almost a thousand Maitatsine were arrested and detained without trial. At the hands of prison officials and hostile police, the detained Maitatsine were given agonizing and dehumanizing treatment.

The consequences of the Maitatsine uprising were devastating. Thousands of lives were lost, property was damaged, and Christians and Muslims alike were attacked. Many fled Kano to villages or other cities where they had relatives. For those who lived in the cities and villages where the violence occurred, it was a deeply sorrowing experience. Many were dispossessed of their houses and what limited property they had. Many owners of small retail shops lost them and their goods. Because nobody went to the Kano market for a week in December, the city's economy had stopped in its tracks. Refugee camps were established for the hundreds of dislocated and homeless people. A psychology of fear descended upon the city. The mere mention of a rumor of an approaching Maitatsine was enough to cause chills in the bravest civilian. People would immediately flee to find refuge.⁴⁵ As such rumors persisted, curfews were imposed by the

government so that the police could keep watch at night.⁴⁶ Disruptions and disorder ensued, businesses were paralyzed, and social services were disrupted. The violence and related activities of the Maitatsine were grave threats to peace and good governance.

The Yan Awaki neighborhood was the most badly devastated. Except for one, all the buildings that had been occupied by Marwa and his followers were destroyed. The neighborhood school sustained extreme damage. Stores were looted, although Marwa had not allowed his followers to take goods other than food. The Yan Awaki market was devastatedthe Maitatsine had slaughtered the animals in the abattoir and looted stalls for supplies. In the Kofar Wambai area, thirteen houses were severely damaged, and 168 partially so. Stores in the Motor Park were destroyed, as were parts of the primary school.

The Aftermath

Embarrassed by the incident, many Muslim organizations and individuals quickly spoke out against the Maitatsine.

47 Since Marwa claimed to be a prophet, they said, he could not be a follower of the Prophet Muhammad. He was alleged to have drunk human blood, which made him a "pagan."⁴⁸ One Yola imam said that he did not know what the Maitatsine taught, how they defined their religion, or even where they prayed; everything was a secret among the Maitatsine.⁴⁹ Abubakar Gumi denounced Marwa as a Satan, a single-minded person who could recite the Qur'an without comprehending it,⁵⁰ and a number of the Muslim intelligentsia agreed that he was not a Muslim.⁵¹ The JNl disowned the Maitatsine, describing it as "a few organized cranks and hoodlums masquerading as Islamic teachers and preachers."⁵² The MSS called the Maitatsine riots a *fitnah*, a corrupt jihad:

it represents a direct attack on Muslims and an affront to the very Islamic principles which all Muslims honor and cherish. All Islamic authorities are agreed that anyone who believes that there is a prophet after Muhammad is not a Muslim; that anybody who rejects the Sunnah of the Prophet does not belong to Islam, even if he professes belief in the Qur'an, and that anybody who attempts to change the Islamic mode of worship is anything but a Muslim. And these are exactly the doctrines of the Maitatsine movement.⁵³

One Yoruba Muslim, the leader of Islam in Ogun State, went as far as publishing an advertisement saying that no true Muslim would regard the Maitatsine as a Muslim sect.⁵⁴ Some said that they had originally been Muslims, but had later become possessed by a demon. The violence enabled leading Muslims to repackage their religion as one of peace. They described the Kano crisis as the handiwork of

fanatics violators of the constitutional principle of religious tolerance and they urged the government to deal swiftly with the Maitatsine.

Both the state and federal governments were forced to defend their actions and inactions, and to make plans to prevent similar occurrences. The Maitatsine violence revealed the depth of the country's economic crises, political instability, and the inability of the security forces to handle insurgents.

It is true that the police lost face when they demonstrated their inability to handle the Maitatsine. But the people of Kano had long ago lost confidence in the Nigerian police force, thanks to its brutalization of hundreds of innocent civilians from whom they sought to extort money. More-

over, the state police commander was identified as an NPN party representative, antagonistic to the PRP. Earlier in 1981, the police had been accused by the PRP of allowing NPN thugs to run rampant in the city, destroying property and killing a high-profile member of the PRP, Dr. Bala Mohammed, political adviser to Governor Rimi.

55

The already questionable authority of the federal government was further weakened. As mentioned in chapter 2, the NPN was opposed by twelve states, including Kano, Kaduna, and Borno where the major riots had occurred. For one thing, the constitution granted broad powers to the states. For another, the NPN was unable to mobilize the masses behind itself. Governor Rimi of Kano, like his counterparts, saw the states as private entities; he was willing to tolerate the existence of a federal government only to the extent that his power was not encroached upon. Whereas the states were assertive, the NPN and the president of Nigeria were both very weak, precisely because of their emphasis on sharing power and money among their cronies. The distributive pressures undermined not just the party, but also the economy.

There was yet another problem. The federal government did not want the crisis to be interpreted as a religious war, perhaps seeking to protect the image of Islam, or perhaps hoping to avoid damage to interreligious relations in the country. It instead adopted the neutral designation of "Kano disturbances." In his New Year's broadcast of 1981, President Shagari absolved his administration of any connection to the crisis and blamed the disturbance on external forces who, he said, were afraid of Nigeria's growing international influence. He promised to order an investigation to study its causes, and he appealed to Nigerians to fight crime and to eliminate all forms of violence.⁵⁶

Shagari's speech became a model of government reaction to all subsequent violent outbreaks of the 1980s and 1990s. The federal government would express shock, seek the cooperation of the public, and promise to investigate. The government usually deny any connection between the violence and its policies, blaming the violence on misguided fanatics manipulated by internal and external anti-government agents out to embarrass Nigeria's leadership and to discredit the country as a whole. In the 1980 riots, the government blamed foreigners, pointing accusatory fingers at Pakistan, Iran, Libya, and highly placed domestic collaborators.⁵⁷

A few days after his national broadcast, Shagari set up a Tribunal of Inquiry headed by Justice Anthony Aniagolu.⁵⁸ Ever since 1980, every major incidence of violence has resulted in the establishment of a similar panel of inquiry. As they tend to be similar, I will focus on the 1980 Tribunal as it

exemplifies the characteristics and orientation of all other such bodies.

59 The Tribunal had full power and authority to hold public and private hearings to inquire into the causes of the violence. It was empowered to do the following:

- (a) determine whether any person or group of persons by conduct or negligence or otherwise howsoever in any way caused or contributed to the breaking out of the disturbances and make, in the light of its findings in that behalf, recommendations as to measures to be taken against any such person or persons;
- (b) ascertain whether there had been incidents of breaches of the peace or of threats to, or actual breakdown in the maintenance of law and order in the areas affected prior to the breaking out of the disturbances and involving any of the persons aforementioned;
- (c) determine whether any person or group of persons propagating or holding religious, political or other beliefs, or any movement or association (howsoever called) led by any person or grouping such persons contributed to or participated in any way in the disturbances;
- (d) ascertain whether any person or group of persons, not being citizens of Nigeria encouraged, contributed to or participated in the disturbances;
- (e) make recommendations in the light of its findings pursuant to the foregoing paragraph as to measures for the effective control of the entry into Nigeria of aliens of such description or where such aliens operate outside Nigeria, measures designed for counteracting their influence on the course of events in Nigeria;
- (f) determine the areas (whether in or outside of Kano State) affected by the disturbances and sections, classes or group of person directly involved therein;
- (g) determine the actual and remote causes of the disturbances and suggest measures for the avoidance of similar incidents in the future and also

measures designed to promote peace and harmony amongst the various sections, groups or classes or persons and communities involved; and

(h) examine any other matter incidental to the foregoing and make recommendations thereon.⁶⁰

The PRP's counsel was murdered soon after the Tribunal began meeting, and the counsel for the Nigerian Police received threatening calls. Other than these two cases, the Tribunal found few obstacles to the commencement of its work. The Tribunal had its first session in Kano on 2 February 1981. Sixty witnesses appeared in person before the Tribunal, and 116 written statements were brought into evidence. The Tribunal spoke with the sultan of Sokoto, the governor of Kano, the emir of Kano, and Alhaji M. Sanusi, a former emir of Kano. It also visited several places affected by the violence.

The Tribunal did not blame any external country or force for the crisis. It dismissed the speculation that Libya, Saudi Arabia, or Israel were behind the cases of violence. It found no evidence that any political party had sponsored Marwa. The NPN government had promoted such speculations partly to minimize the role of political and economic mismanagement of the country.

Instead, the Tribunal put most of the blame on Marwa himself, ascribing to him personal responsibility for the riots. He was "lawlessness and disorder blended into one, surpassed or equaled in severity or recklessness only by his dogmatic adherence to his own version of the Islamic faith."

61 In the view of the Tribunal, Marwa had demonstrated to the nation the consequences of intolerance. The way to avoid future crises, they concluded, was not only to prevent the rise of people like Marwa, but also to find the means for all religious leaders to tolerate one another. The recruitment of young children as *almajiri*, they suggested, should be checked. The state ought also to do what it can to prevent the possibility of recruitment from the "horde of unemployed, gullible and idle citizens in our cities."⁶² The solution to this, according to the Tribunal, was to create light industries and labor-intensive occupational projects.

As Marwa was not originally a Nigerian, and because he was able to recruit followers from other West African countries, the Tribunal was able to establish some degree of foreign involvement. Of the one thousand Maitatsine arrested, 185 were foreigners. Of this number, 162 were from the Niger Republic, sixteen from Chad, four from Cameroon, two from Mali, and one from Upper Volta.⁶³ Only six of the foreigners had the paperwork that made them legal residents of Nigeria. The Tribunal exaggerated the impact of these aliens in the

Maitatsine violence, considering that the same Tribunal said ten thousand Maitatsine had taken part in the Kano disturbance. No evidence that any of the 185 foreigners even took part in the riots exists. According to police records, most of them were not arrested in Kano, or even during the riots, but in police roadblocks just outside Kano. They were believed to be Maitatsine from Borno and Sokoto coming at Marwa's invitation to join their counterparts in the Kano insurgency.⁶⁴ How the police determined that these men were Maitatsine followers, we may never know, but in those days when the police were angry with (and fearful of) the sect, such roadblocks were a safe way for the officers to assert their might without putting themselves at much risk.

The 185 illegal aliens provided the Tribunal with an opportunity to identify a group of people to share the blame for the violence. They also enabled it to dwell at length on a recommendation to policing Nigeria's

borders in order to control the influx of aliens. Among the problems pointed out were widespread laxity in the enforcement of the rules and regulations governing entry into the country; the existence of grossly inadequate gazetted entry points; the total absence of border patrol units; the complete absence of either legislation or provisions for the registration of African aliens; and the unavailability of any government machinery for monitoring the movements and activities of African aliens and their impact on the social and economic life of the country. Extensive suggestions, some amounting to excessive policing of foreigners, were made. The Tribunal called for "a permanent state of surveillance" on aliens.

65 That the Tribunal would ignore the evidence that the involvement of aliens in the crisis had been minimal and go to great lengths to make the control of foreigners one of its core recommendations perhaps reflects the federal government's belief that many of the country's problems could be attributed to outsiders. In the 1980s, the government expelled West African refugees who had become scapegoats for all manner of economic crises.

The Tribunal also identified some other causes for the Maitatsine riots. They compiled a list of men whose lapses made the violence inevitable. There had been negligence on the part of the police and the National Security Organization for their failure to stop the sect from building such a strength. The magnitude of the force was unknown and the patrol of the border so lax that foreigners could enter with ease and swell the ranks of the Maitatsine. Both the police and the security agents had been unable to effectively coordinate their activities to be able to handle the sect. The Tribunal also indicted the Kano State government for allowing Marwa to violate a deportation order and to stay in Kano, and for not having put him in jail for a

longer duration. The municipal government was accused of allowing Marwa to violate numerous laws. The Kano state government was accused of taking the security of its people too lightly. It knew about the danger posed by the sect, according to the Tribunal, but it did little and acted too late to check it. The Tribunal accused the Kano state government both of condoning Maitatsine criminal activities and of negligence. A number of individual state political functionaries were identified for negligence and dereliction of duty, like the commissioner for special duties, who failed to order the arrest of Marwa when he had the reason and the opportunity to do so, and the secretary of the state government, who did not think that security matters were particularly important. Governor Rimi was criticized for his failure to take Kano's security seriously, for dining with "the emissaries of a terrorist" when Marwa's delegation visited him, and for writing a letter to Marwa that tipped the government's hand and fueled his self-importance.⁶⁶

In the intense power struggle of the time, the political implications of what the Tribunal said were more important than its specific suggestions. Aniagolu's findings were read by the PRP and Governor Rimi of Kano as an attempt by the NPN to discredit them. Rather than turning their attention to the major issues, the state and federal governments continued with increased political bickering. The Kano state government published a statement denying any charges of dereliction. Rimi and his government said that they knew Marwa was a threat only in 1980, and that they had designed a plan for neutralizing him by arresting him.

67 Twice Rimi had invited him to partake in peaceful discussions, and twice Marwa had rebuffed the governor. Not only that, but when the plan failed, they gave Marwa a two-week ultimatum to leave town, but the police refused to cooperate in enforcing it. The PRP government wondered why the Tribunal singled it out for blame without mentioning previous governments, which had also failed to expel Marwa from the town, or the federal government, which refused to render assistance at the proper time. The radical PRP said Marwa had been an ally of the NPN and other conservatives, but that he had turned against them and others.⁶⁸

Unbeknownst to the state, however, remnants of the Maitatsine had fled in different directions and were able to regroup. Not only did they continue with their practices, but they awaited opportunities to protest. In 1982, President Shehu Shagari pardoned one thousand convicts, attempting to decongest the prisons and save money, but in so doing he released several of the Maitatsine; needless to say, this was an unpopular decision, which was condemned even within his own party and among Muslims.

The riots were repeated elsewhere in patterns similar to those of the

Maitatsine riots. Why did the riots spread after the death of Marwa and why did they involve so many thousands of people? Marwa's followers were dispersed, bitter, and vindictive, but Marwa's death did not bring an end to his ideas and his worldview. There were also social and economic conditions that drove many young people to the option of violence.⁶⁹ The first follow-up riot took place in Bulunkutu, a village fifteen kilometers east of Maiduguri. The fight lasted four days, and many lives were lost.⁷⁰ The Maitatsine regrouped in Kaduna, where many were also killed.⁷¹ Two years later, such vicious and deadly violence occurred in Yola that it took a combined operation of the police, the army, and the air force to end it.⁷² Almost a year later, Gombe witnessed its own riots, which featured very sophisticated fighting.⁷³

Wherever the violence occurred, consequences were similar to those of the Kano disturbance. People lived in fear and armed themselves in

anticipation of trouble. In October 1982, the mere mention of the Maitatsine created widespread panic and stampede.

74 Lives were lost in every case. In Yola, many parts of the city remained without electricity for a long time because three substations of the Nigerian Electric Power Authority had been destroyed. Transformers, utility poles, and meters had all been burned.⁷⁵ Not less than sixty thousand people became homeless. As bodies were left on streets for days until they decomposed, risks to public health were reported as well.⁷⁶ Prices of goods skyrocketed. The Yola Central Market was destroyed. Drought, disease, and riots all exacerbated the general economic disaster of the early 1980s.⁷⁷

In an editorial dated 5 November 1982, written in the wake of the religious riots in Bulunkutu, the *National Concord* predicted that religious violence could become "an ugly recurring decimal."⁷⁸ What the newspaper was unable to do was to explain why more riots were on the way. The government of the Second Republic was already discredited by then, a fact well known to the public. The economic crisis had deepened, and religious nationalism was also intense. Indeed, the ground was fertile for the production of more violence. The Maitatsine riots did not prove to be an isolated case, as many had hoped.

6

A Decade of Clashes: Muslim-Christian Relations in the 1980s

By the late 1980s, conflicts between Muslims and Christians had become public, volatile, and dangerous. There were incidences of violence, the most disastrous one occurring in 1987. In 1986, the federal government established an Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (ACRA) to mediate between the two religions and to advise the government on religious matters. This Council immediately became embroiled in the crisis, as Muslim and Christian representatives found themselves unable to agree on a committee chair, or, for that matter, on much of anything, and they usually refused even to meet. The few meetings that actually took place, usually under pressure from the government, produced few concrete statements or decisions.

1 Interreligious relations had reached their lowest point, and nobody was able to serve as an effective mediator. In what follows, I shall analyze the concerns of the leadership and membership of both religions, and the conflicts that ensued.

During this decade, Christian organizations accused three successive civilian and military governments of pro-Islam policies and of scheming to turn the country into an Islamic state. The government was accused of making too many Muslim political appointments, unfairly limiting the numbers of foreign Christian missionaries allowed in Nigeria, using government funds to subsidize the importation of rams for traditional sacrifice coinciding with the end of the hajj. Among the most serious allegations made by the Christians

were that people in control of the federal government did

not believe that Nigeria should be a secular state, that these leaders deliberately made Nigeria a member of the OIC, that federal money went to subsidize Muslims undertaking the hajj, and that they encouraged anti-Christian literature and sermons by notable Islamic preachers. Following the riots of 1987, CAN informed the federal government that

until Christians are convinced that their safety and well being as an integral part of Nigeria is assured, we will assume that the moslems of Nigeria have decided to eliminate the Christians in their midst.

2

Islamic youth movements were criticized for their radicalism and their substantial clandestine collection of funds from anti-Christian countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. These foreign countries were allegedly involved in a conspiracy to Islamize all Nigerians. Islamic leaders from the north and elsewhere were accused of obtaining political and economic privileges on the basis of their faith. In 1987, a small group of very intelligent lecturers from central Nigeria, all based at the University of Jos, wrote a highly critical book on the Hausa-Fulani political class. Provocatively entitled *The Kaduna Mafia*, the book has as its frontispiece a picture of an overfed and flashily affluent Hausa-Fulani politician standing on top of fellow-Nigerians. The book chronicles the Hausa-Fulani's manipulation of Islam to create both a political class and a "mafia." As long as this Islamic mafia is in power, concludes the book, Nigerians should not expect any progress or development.³ Muslim leaders were also accused of turning Abuja, the new federal capital, into an Islamic city, fostering Islamic architecture and mosques all over Nigeria.⁴ The widespread use of the Hausa language was interpreted as a move toward making it an official language, while at the same time using it to promote a particularly Islamic identity and nationalism. The

building of mosques close to airports and hotels was seen as part of a plan to present an Islamic face to the outside world. The debate over secularism and al-Shari'a was very much alive. A number of Christian schools and hospitals had been taken over and Islamized in some states in the north. In Zaria, all the primary mission schools had been acquired, and their Christian names changed to Islamic ones. In the states of Kano and Sokoto, it had become difficult to teach Christian religious education in schools in the face of opposition from Muslims and the government. The state-owned television station in Kano could not broadcast Christian religious programs, only Islamic ones. Obtaining land to build churches had become difficult, as many Christian organizations were denied access to land and to the certificates of occupancy needed to ensure the

approval of building plans. Christians complained that loudspeakers installed in the minarets of mosques disturbed them many times a day, and that traffic flow was stopped every Friday during the jumat prayer. Christians were annoyed that some Muslims went as far as to canvass for an Islamic national government to replace the failed military and secular governments.

5

In 1988, a Christian magazine reported that a pamphlet published in Cairo in 1935, known as the *Ajturtushi*, had been seen circulating, much to the consternation of the Christian community.⁶ The pamphlet described guidelines for punishing and humiliating Jews and Christians as third-class citizens. The pamphlet was meant, asserted the magazine, to remind the Nigerian Muslims of an Islamic injunction: "I do not honor those people since God despises them. I do not respect them since God humiliated them. I do not put them in my company since God has sent them away." The same magazine and others also pointed out that a dangerous book called *Black Gold and Holy War* was in circulation.⁷ The author of this book had made some provocative remarks about Christians, including the sentence most widely cited by preachers alerting their followers to the threat posed by Islam: "There are only three alternatives for dealing with the non-Muslims under the Islamic legal system: (1) they must be converted; (2) they must be subjugated; (3) they must be eliminated."⁸ Christians took this statement seriously, and most of their responses to Islam were conditioned by fear. Soon after, the federal government yielded to pressure from the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and the Iranian government to ban the importation of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Christians took this as further evidence of official support for both Islam and Khomeini's 'fundamentalist philistinism.'⁹

By 1988, CAN and many Christian leaders had been urging their followers to protect the interest of Christianity in the country through political involvement. "If Christians distance themselves from politics that leads to leadership," declared CAN in 1988, "then demons will have a field day as had been the case with Nigeria up till today. If demons govern and rule us and burn our churches and marginalize us and treat us like second class citizens in our country of posting, then why should the Christian complain?"¹⁰

Muslims had complaints similar to those of Christians, saying that Christians had stigmatized and slandered the jihad as unfeeling violence without appreciating the issues that make Islam militant. Many Muslims thought that the Christians were difficult to relate to because they practiced a brand of Christianity lacking love and moral values, and too Westernized for Nigeria. JNI members say that Nigerian Christians are unreasonably

hostile to the Muslims in spite of the fact that Muslims accept Christians, mentioning Christian hostility to the OIC and al-Shari'a as two examples. This hostility, according to JNI, promoted anger among the Muslims. With respect to the issue of misunderstanding, JNI accused Christians of calling Muslims "all sorts of bad names such as fundamentalists, fanatics, *etc.* as a quality for any faithful Muslim who believe in living according to Islamic injunctions."

11 To achieve peace in the country, JNI invited

- (a) the Christians to stop their objections to the Muslims getting their fundamental rights in accordance with the demand of their religion;
- (b) the Governments to give religion its rightful place in the scheme of things in the life of the Nigerian Community;
- (c) the Government to accede to the demand of the Muslims for their fundamental rights in accordance with their religion and constitution; and
- (d) the Federal and State Governments to establish avenues for various religious followings to get together and deliberate on issues of mutual interest and thereby through such avenues to coordinate religious activities.¹²

To many members of the Muslim intelligentsia, Islam had just two enemies: the West and Christianity. In 1983, the Muslim Students Society (MSS) described both enemies as dangerously imperialist:

The third decade of this new imperialism is in fact ushering us into the grip of our detractors at pace which is unprecedented in the history of the peoples of this country. NATO has already installed its men (obviously intelligence officials) as academic staff in our universities. American (Jewish) Agro-business industries have already got the better of the so-called Green Revolution. Even our Federal Capital is being built under the supervision of American consultants, whose connection with the U.S. State Department is hardly disputable. A call has already been made for our

security system to be organized along the American one and who can do this better than the Americans themselves?¹³

In 1987, JNII affirmed this statement, and traced its origin to the colonial period, to what it called the origin of all the postcolonial problems:

The Muslims believe that the inherited colonial set up prevailing in Nigeria favours the Christians. The British colonialists who were themselves Christians and who ruled Nigeria together with Christian Missionaries left behind a set up which is Christian in fact and outlook. Any attempt by the Muslims to have such inherited Christian set up adjusted is resisted with hostility by the Christians while the country is not wholly a Christian country. This hos-

tile attitude of the Christian in maintaining the status quo is encouraged by the nonchalant attitude of the Governments to the Muslims' demands.

14

Many issues agitated Muslims. In 1982, the MSS spoke for a large number of Muslims when it asserted that Islam had been a victim of the imposition of Christian/Western values, which had tended to erode some of its own values and to persecute Muslims:

Sunday remains the national weekend, Christian new year is the national new year, the Christian doctrine of the separation of church and state is the national philosophy, Christian calendar is the official calendar and Euro-Christian Law remains supreme. But Islam's Friday, new year, calendar and its philosophy are thrown away in the name of "complete equality" between religions, while its Law even in completely Muslim areas remains subservient to the colonial law.¹⁵

Other grievances included the Christian Saturday holiday; the neglect of the Muslim *hijra* calendar; the fact that the Muslim crescent was not used as a symbol in public institutions; Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the Vatican; Easter and Christmas recesses in the schools and courts; government-sponsored Christmas festivities and decorations; that Muslims were unable to pray during school and work periods; that schools in the south did not provide enough teachers to teach Islamic education and Muslim teachers were not used as principals in a number of Islamic schools; and that Christian police officers were posted to the Muslim areas. Christian organizations were accused of receiving external support for anti-Muslim campaigns from neocolonial forces. In order for Muslims to thrive, they said, the impact of Christianity needed to be eliminated, and if possible, an Islamic order installed. The MSS concluded that the best option for Nigeria was not adapting Western institutions, but instantiating an Islamic model of governance.¹⁶

To fully appreciate these accusations and counteraccusations, we must locate them in their broader contexts. The issues that dominated the conflicts can be divided into six major themes, the first of which has been covered extensively in chapter 3: the fight over who should control the state, over the secular or religious character of the state itself, and the nature of its legal system. I shall here treat the other five.

Spheres of Influence and Domination

Which religion should dominate in what part of the country? This point is hardly mentioned in the literature because its essence is not clearly understood.

Conversion is an ongoing process to the Islamic and Christian movements alike. Numbers are crucial if central Nigeria were to be converted to Islam, the balance of national power would shift, the dynamics of confrontation would change, and more pressure could be put on the state to grant concessions to Muslims.

The Muslim elite does not contest Christian domination of the eastern part of the country. One *'ulama* remarked that "Allah created that place as the land of the kaffir,"

17 signaling resignation to the difficulty of conversion. But he probably meant more than that if the entire country could be won over, there would be no "pagans" to exploit. This may be one man's opinion, but it is widely known that the East has been largely abandoned by Islamic preachers.

In the north, however, Muslims did not want to yield an inch, and thus, most problems have concentrated there. Central Nigeria, with its large Christian population, has been the most permanent source of tension. To many Muslim leaders, to yield the central part of the country to Christian control would be to allow the hostile destruction of the north. Central Nigeria has always been useful, both politically and economically, to the Muslim political elite. In the nineteenth century, its people were derided as "infidels" whom the Muslims could tolerate as neighbors without having to choose between offending Allah or converting them forcibly to Islam. The jihad did not even intend to force them to convert. However, there were economic considerations behind this religious tolerance. As non-Muslims, they could be enslaved, and indeed, the area became a virtual slave farm. Central Nigerians were required to pay more taxes and to render service in the army. The area was raided for booty, and some jihads extended into some parts of the central region. Islam

spread but slowly, and northern Muslims were allowed to settle here. By 1952, less than 10% of the population professed Islam.

In the 1950s and 1960s, political exigencies called for the Islamization of the area. The strategy was to use the NPC's power to spread Islam and to convert as many local chiefs as possible. Funds were committed to an Islamization strategy embarked upon at the highest level of government by no less a person as *Sardauna* Bello. While a few were converted, though, most central Nigerians resisted. In the 1950s and through the First Republic, the NPC struggled tooth and nail to keep central Nigeria within its fold. For it to control the Federal House of Representatives, it had to win a majority of seats, and an NPC bloc in the central part of the country would prevent NPC's rivals from making inroads into the north. But the NPC worried that it was, in fact, most vulnerable in the center of the country. It

began to sponsor non-Muslims in order to increase its chances of survival, a strategy that has remained in place ever since. Central Nigeria will not be allowed to divide the north. If all the people there could be converted, the situation would become manageable. The central region will continue to be contested by both religions for a long time to come.

The Yoruba areas in the southwest have also seen a split. Conflicts here have been minimal so far, but tension has been building gradually. A Yoruba-Muslim identity is getting stronger and stronger, and it is too early to say what the far-reaching implications of this will be on future politics. As I shall mention later, there was a conflict in the University of Ibadan in 1985, and other tensions suggest that violence might erupt here in the future. A few examples from the 1980s illustrate this point. The Yoruba Muslim intelligentsia and people who write about the Yoruba religion have presented Yoruba Muslims as tolerant. This is true, except for the fact that relations between them and the Christians have been souring since the mid-1980s, in large part attributable to the OIC crisis and the utilization of religion for power.

A number of Yoruba Muslims supported Babangida's decision to join the OIC. Some of their reasons were similar to what others had advanced, and there is no need to repeat them here.

¹⁸ What is interesting is that the champions were mainly university-educated people. At the forefront of Babangida supporters were teachers in the Department of Islamic and Arabic Studies of the University of Ibadan,¹⁹ and several Muslim organizations such as the Yoruba Muslim Youth Organization, the National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations of Nigeria, and the Nigeria Muslim Council. The latter organization held a major rally and public demonstration in support of the OIC on 2 February 1986, and in a related press release

it defended the OIC and condemned the idea of administering Nigeria as "a Christian state."²⁰ Nigerians were reminded of Muslim toughness and anti-OIC media outlets like the *Guardian*, *Sketch*, and the *Tribune* were vilified. Pamphlets and placards seen at the demonstration reflected the mood of Muslims: "Close Nigeria's Embassy in Vatican City," "To Hell With Apostles of Secularity," and "Down With Agents of Zionism" were some favorite slogans.²¹ Yoruba Christians fought back with anti-OIC placards, pamphlets, and slogans, further intensifying the confrontation.

The Yoruba Muslims also defended the Babangida administration against CAN's allegation that his government was pro-Islam. In addition, they demanded a greater share in political offices in all the Yoruba-speaking areas.²² For example, in Oyo state, a Muslim organization asked the governor to reconstitute his cabinet by adding more Muslims, threatening a jihad

if he did not get his way.

23 The Christian domination of boards and parastatal organizations was severely criticized.²⁴ Similar demands for religious equity were made in other states.²⁵ Although most demands were made through press releases and Muslims were mobilized mostly in mosques, there were cases of public demonstrations. In Oyo State, the militant Islamic Revolutionary Squad threatened the use of violence in 1987, demanding that the Oyo State Television Station should give equal time to all religious groups.²⁶

During the same period, many Yoruba Muslims and organizations began to demand the introduction of al-Shari'a for the same reasons that have been highlighted above. They used Islamic organizations and the *National Concord*, a newspaper owned by Chief M. K. O. Abiola, the business magnate and politician, to launch their campaigns. They were supported by many northern Muslims and the *New Nigerian* newspaper.

The champion of al-Shari'a was Chief Abiola, who was appointed as the Chairman of the National Committee on Shari'a. He worked hard and tirelessly, and spent prodigious sums, to recruit prominent Yoruba Muslims into his cause. He sponsored the building of mosques and Islamic organizations. Dr. Lateef Adegbite, the influential legal adviser and secretary-general of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and many others joined in Abiola's demand for al-Shari'a. Islamic associations like the League of Imams and Alfas and the Muslim Women Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN), were coopted.²⁷ Before the 1980s, Abiola had taken a subdued position on al-Shari'a, even when he was a member of the Constituent Assembly in 1978. His conversion to intense support for al-Shari'a came not because he became more devout as a Muslim, but for political

reasons. Two covert goals were involved, neither of which was particularly new. The first was to build a political bridge to the north, something many prominent Yoruba politicians had done in the past, men like Chief Adisa Akinloye (Chairman of the NPN, 1979-1983), Chief S. L. Akintola (premier of the Western Region during the First Republic), and Chief Richard Akinjide (western regional minister and the country's attorney general during the Second Republic). Whereas these other politicians had relied on political parties to forge alliances with the north, Chief Abiola was innovative in his use of Islamic issues. At the time, it appeared to be a brilliant strategy for one reason: Abiola thought that Muslims in the north would trust him, and that the northern political elite would accept the leadership of a fellow-Muslim. His second goal was to overcome the threat posed by the UPN politicians, the followers of the legendary Chief Obafemi Awolowo. For more than three decades Chief Awolowo and his political parties had dominated the region. Chief Abiola was not a member of the UPN, and

had in fact joined the NPN and used the newspaper he controlled to smear Awolowo's image.

Abiola's strategy was a colossal failure. He alienated the Christian population, jeopardizing his own largest political constituency. He was later forgiven in 1993, partly because he returned to the more rewarding game of ethnic strife, and because people were by then fed up with Babangida. He had also been unable to carry behind him the majority of the Yoruba Muslim intelligentsia who understood his game, and the supposedly neutral people who warned that al-Shari'a would divide the Yoruba people. Worse still, he was unable to get the amount of support he had intended from northern Muslims. Although he would eventually win the 1993 presidential election, his alliances and strategies were unable to get him into office.

On the basis of the history described above and other data, three points about the southwest's role in the politics of religious control emerge. First, evangelization is intense both Islam and Christianity continue a cutthroat struggle for converts. Second, Muslims are more and more aggressive in challenging every aspect of Christianity. An Islamic elite argues that Christians have always had the lion's share. Third, it is unlikely that violence of the scale seen in the north will occur here, not just because the leaders of both religion always emphasize accommodation, but because a strong Yoruba-Muslim identity, powerful enough to neutralize Yoruba ethnicity, has yet to emerge.

Education

Another major area of conflict was the control of the school system and the curricular role of religion. Since independence, Muslims have become opposed to the ownership and control of schools by Christian missionaries. A notable Islamic scholar described Nigerian schools "as

breeding grounds for Christians, and enemies of Islam."

28 This is rather severe, ignoring the historical antecedents of most of these schools. Since the introduction of Christianity in the nineteenth century, it had been accompanied by the establishment of Western-style schools. When the colonial administration became more interested in education after the 1920s, it deliberately promoted educational cooperation with the church in order to reduce costs. Muslims began to establish their own schools, too, but their numbers were few. With regional autonomy in the 1950s and independence in 1960, the north spent a substantial amount of money to establish public schools,

partly to increase enrollment and to reduce the impact of Christian mission schools. In the 1970s, many Muslims and others began to argue against Christian mission schools and urged the government to take them over. Among the arguments against such Christian schools were that they had become irrelevant in modern Nigeria, that the state could afford public education, and that while Nigerians needed common national values, mission schools limited themselves to specifically Christian values. With the influx of oil money, the Nigerian state was able to finance schools, and nationalized many Christian schools in the 1970s, much to the annoyance of many Christian religious organizations.

Muslims rejected western education that did not teach Arabic and Islamic religious knowledge. They fought for these curricula in 1976, insisting further that Hausa be the language of instruction. In addition, they succeeded in minimizing the teaching of Christian religious knowledge in northern schools, and in removing African traditional religions from many schools so as not to promote "paganism."

In the 1980s, Yoruba Muslims sought to put an end completely to Christian domination of the educational system. As far as they were concerned, the purpose of those schools was to evangelize the youth, taking them away from Islam. The National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations of Nigeria (NACOMYO) became the leading crusader for the educational rights of Muslims. It demanded the teaching of Islam in all schools, more funding for Islamic schools, and better representation of Muslims in the management of schools.

29

Power and Resource Sharing

The use of religion to obtain political office has become completely

entrenched in Nigeria. Since the 1980s, it has become an established practice to distribute important political and administrative offices on the basis of religious affiliations. As I have indicated above, CAN felt that Muslims received unfairly many privileges from the government as compared to Christians. The distribution of political and bureaucratic offices contributed to the rivalries among the elite of both religions.

How the nation's resources should be shared was yet another issue with religious dimensions. In the politics of resource distribution, ethnicity has compounded the religious divide to generate intense struggles over how regions and areas will divide national wealth. No satisfactory arrangement has yet been reached. From the point of view of the southern Christian

intelligentsia, the Islamic north takes an incommensurate share, considering its relatively small contribution to the nation's resources.

Pilgrimage

The fifth area of conflict was the role of the state in the organization of pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia. Muslims are enjoined to go on the pilgrimage at least once in their lives, if they can afford it. While Christians do not contest this duty, they do not want the government to subsidize the pilgrimage. The government did not begin to take such a role until the 1950s, when the western and northern regional governments established the Pilgrims Welfare Boards to minimize the hardship associated with the journey. In the years that followed, government support increased to the point that the hajj was a subsidized activity.

With the oil boom bringing prosperity, the number of pilgrims rose dramatically, reaching a peak of 106,000 in the year 1977. Nigerians made up the second largest delegation of any country that year. The increase in numbers, along with logistical problems associated with the journey, brought two forms of government intervention. In order to ensure that only genuine Muslims undertook the journey, people desiring to make the hajj were required to pass basic tests of Islamic faith, answering questions relating to prayer, *salat*, and the expectations of the hajj. The government sought to curb prostitution by barring single women from making the hajj, and to prevent pilgrimage-related deaths by keeping the weak and the sick at home.

A number of problems arose with government intervention, each of which generated its own crisis. The first was the imposition of quotas, in order to limit government spending and to keep the number of pilgrims passing through the system down to a manageable size. The second is that an effortless hajj became a common expectation, and

the government was blamed for any problems. In three consecutive years (1975-78), three heads of state had to publicly apologize to pilgrims for their hardships. The establishment in 1975 of the Nigerian Pilgrims Board was ostensibly meant to meet the needs of both Muslims and Christians, although the former certainly benefited the most. A similar 1989 decree promulgating a Nigerian Pilgrims Commission was aimed overtly at Muslim pilgrims.

30

While Christians saw nothing wrong in the pilgrimage, they did not think that the state should use large portions of its money subsidizing it.³¹ If the state wanted to commit its resources to pilgrimage, Christians suggested that they be given a share in order to make pilgrimages to Rome and

Israel. In 1985, the government did offer limited financial support to Christians and established a Christian Pilgrims Board. But this support was meager compared to what the Muslims received.

32 As far as the Muslims were concerned, however, Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not a religious obligation, but tourism.³³

In 1987, at the peak of the conflict between Muslims and Christians, the Oyo state branch of CAN called on all state governments to withdraw from pilgrimage groups. This kind of involvement, CAN argued, violated the secular nature of the constitution, which demanded that the government should remain aloof of religious practices and festivals. Individuals should take the pilgrimage as a personal responsibility and plan it without seeking government assistance or support.

The 1989 decree establishing the Nigerian Pilgrims' Commission was interpreted by Christians as a deliberate instance of Muslim favoritism, especially since Christians had been excluded from the new arrangement. CAN went to court to seek the decree's abrogation on the basis of discrimination. While the judge said he lacked the power to nullify a military decree, he nevertheless admitted that it was discriminatory and unjust, saying that it could create disaffection among Christians and jeopardize peace, order, and good government.³⁴

Foreign Policy

A final area of interreligious conflict was the country's foreign policy. Since independence, religion has affected the conduct of external relations in such areas as the definition of national interests, the preference of the north for Islamic countries, the role of foreign missionaries, and relations with the West.³⁵ Relations with Israel were

a source of disagreement throughout the 1980s. CAN and many Nigerian Christians believed that the break in diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Israel from 1973 to 1991 was not only politically motivated, but was instigated and sponsored by the Muslims as a gesture of spite against the Christians. CAN advised the government that relations with Israel were economically profitable, that Israeli companies were operating in Nigeria (Solel Boneh, Afro-Continental, and Dizengoff), and that consular services were required to assist Christian pilgrims.³⁶ The opposition of Muslims was based on the grounds that Israel was anti-Islam, anti-Arab, and in support of Nigerian Christians. They preferred to see the strengthening of relations with Islamic countries and more cautious relations with the West.³⁷

Prelude to Violence: Skirmishes

Since the late 1970s, interreligious riots had been anticipated both by the Muslims and Christians, but nobody knew where or when they would break out. Threats of a prolonged, intractable religious war had been made as far back as 1978. A few clashes with religious motives or undertones had also been reported, as in Wukari (Gongola state) in August 1985, where forty people were injured. Bibles and the Qur'an were burned in a number of places as opposing groups provoked one another. In 1978, a church was demolished in Kano because it was built in a residential zone inhabited mainly by Muslims.

38 Again in October 1982, Muslim students damaged churches and hotels, injured many, and killed three in an anti-Christian protest.³⁹ Appeals for religious tolerance became part of the regular speeches of government functionaries and religious leaders. Meanwhile, as I shall point out in chapter 8 below, violent verbal warfare was being conducted in churches, mosques, and other venues.

If the south had managed to escape the devastating physical violence associated with the north, the University of Ibadan in the southwest became a most unexpected source of danger and volatility in 1985 and 1986. Christians and Muslims there were entangled in a bitter argument, with the Minister of Education intervening in the vice-chancellor's authority and the public preparing for a fight. Even to outsiders, the cause seems like it should have been inconsequential to a community of scholars accustomed to grappling with complex intellectual issues. The controversy centered on a cross erected in the 1950s to denote places of worship in the university. The church was the first to be built, and a mosque came much later. Christians originally predominated at the university, both as teachers and students, which accounts for the location of two prominent churches

on campus. In 1985, Muslims complained that the location of the cross in front of the eastern side of their mosque violated the Islamic requirement that Muslims not see a cross, idol, or effigy during worship. They demanded that the cross be moved or relocated closer to the church.

The Christians were infuriated. They blamed two Muslim politicians who visited the university and advised Muslims to assert themselves by provoking a fight over the cross.⁴⁰ The Christians had evidence against a number of other politicians as well. This incident came at a time when interreligious hostility had reached its peak and when a number of Yoruba Muslims were calling for the imposition of al-Shari'a. Chief Abiola, now determined to play the religion card, became involved in what was becoming known as the Ibadan Cross Crisis. The school's Islamic community

invited Abiola for a fundraising event, during which it was alleged that he and other Muslims had complained about the location of the cross. A notable Ibadan chief, the wealthy Alhaji Arisekola Alao, accompanied Chief Abiola on the trip. While Alao has never run for office, he has consistently identified with whomever is in power in order to feather his own nest. He is also known to be supportive of the Islamic cause. Either out of politics or commitment to his religion, he joined Abiola in criticizing the location of the cross. The view of these two giants could not be ignored by the university intelligentsia, who had invited them and who were equally opposed to the Christian domination of the university and of Yoruba politics.

The university refused to remove the cross, arguing that it had become a landmark free of any church associations. The controversy was dragged before the public and before the government in Lagos. A small cross had become the object of national debate, setting the stage for a violent confrontation in the major city of Ibadan. Jibril Aminu, the minister of education, had acquired among Christians the negative image of a jihadist bent on destroying Christians and their schools. For the Christian teachers, the cross provided an opportunity to fight Aminu; for the Muslims, an opportunity to rid the university of Christian association. Many Christians on campus and in public alleged that Abiola and other influential Muslims had lobbied the federal government to resolve the controversy in favor of the Islamic side. Worshippers prepared for a fight and the attention of the national media focused on the school.

41

The Muslims wondered why the cross, as a symbol of Christianity, should be a landmark at a non-Christian university. "Is it morally defensible," Muslim leaders asked, "to protect a colonial privilege in a

national institution such as the University of Ibadan in utter disregard for the right of fellow Nigerians simply because that privilege has been there for 32 years?"⁴² Two small incidents indicated that violence was a possibility. In May 1986, some unidentified people burned a statue of Christ in a Protestant chapel near the mosque, alerting Christians to possible danger. Christians hastily organized vigilante groups to keep an eye on the church.⁴³ Two months later, many Muslims from the city had joined Muslims on campus to protest about the issue. This was the first such public religious protest on campus, a frightening development for the school authorities.⁴⁴

The minister of education intervened, deciding that the cross would be left as it was, but that a crescent would be erected next to it to denote the common use of the land by both religions; moreover, a large structure was to be erected to block the mosque's view of the cross. But as the structure was being erected, Muslims complained that it was too close to the mosque,

and only the timely intervention of senior mediators prevented a violent attack on the builders.

The resolution of the conflict was taken up by the northern media as an exemplary instance of the prevention of religious conflict. In an editorial on the matter, the influential *New Nigerian* praised the school's authorities, conclude that "we must use the U.I. example to resolve all other religious differences capable of tearing us apart."

45 This statement was made somewhat tongue-in-cheek, and it is not unlikely that the editorialist was poking fun at Jibril Aminu, the Muslim education minister who had been ridiculed and maligned by Christians over his role in the matter. But the important point is that the issue was resolved and that the way it was resolved offered a model for other cases.

Such a view misses the fact that most of the participants were university intellectuals, who made use of more subdued tactics than would extremists; moreover, as members of an elite group they would never have pushed the crisis to the point at which they would lose their privileges. They resorted instead to press releases and behind-the-scenes politicking. Such elite groups' normal modus operandi was normally to instigate and manipulate a crowd of followers to the point of violence, later withdrawing in order to benefit in one way or other from the consequences. In one notorious case in Kaduna in 1987, someone who was alleged to have instigated a crisis was very nearly put on the investigatory tribunal.⁴⁶

One last point missed by the editorial is that the crisis fostered religious nationalism on campus and throughout many parts of the southwest. This had started as essentially a local affair, but publicity turned it into a national issue, which explains why they Kaduna-based

New Nigerian felt the need to give it prominence. The tensions on campus lingered for years, and the two opposing groups continued to abuse one another with references to the cross crisis. When a violent coup was staged against Babangida a few years later, some prominent Christians on the campus were falsely accused of having taken part in it. A few of them were even arrested, but were later released. Muslims involved in the accusations were censured for besmirching their colleagues such agonies, for dragging the name of the university through the mud, and for encouraging campus animosity. The forestalled violence had become a war of words. Later, when a statue of Christ was burned in front of the Catholic Church, religious leaders assumed that the conflict was about to resurge, but the campus remained calm.

As with the debate over al-Shari'a, the cross controversy revealed the nature of cleavages among the Yoruba. It shows decisively how strong a religion-oriented Yoruba identity can be. The unity of the Yoruba ethnic

identity showed severe signs of weakness as the federal government had to be called in to prevent members of one religious group from attacking another. In trying to explain the minimal religious conflict among the Yoruba, David Laitin has argued that

ancestral city politics, and not world religion, works as a "pattern of group activity" and serves as the "dominant symbolic framework" in Yorubaland. Thus political calculations based on ancestral city attachments are "commonsensical" in the Yoruba context while calculations based on religious adherence are considered fanatic, irrelevant, or out of the realm of calculation.

47

The role of Abiola, Arisekola and other Muslims in the Ibadan Cross Crisis, and the controversy over al-Shari'a, indicate that this thesis requires substantial modification if it is to accommodate the impact of religious cleavages. Conflicts among the Yoruba may not have reached the level of those in the north, but the rhetoric of animosity is as strong as it is anywhere else.

The Abiola story, especially his ultimate failure to ascend to the presidency under the banner of Islam and his humiliation in the hands of his long-standing northern friends and associates, indicates the predicament of Yoruba Muslims in Nigerian politics. Should they antagonize fellow Yoruba Christians, they risk weakening ethnic solidarity and their immediate constituency. Once this happens, the ability to use their Islamism to negotiate in national politics becomes compromised. Yet Islam can be useful in creating a political outreach to the north. This outreach has brought some self-serving businessmen and politicians power and money, but a negative political image among their own people. Alhaji Arisekola is a case in point: his northern connection has taken him to the corridors of power at Abuja,

but he has suffered an image problem in his own ethnic base.

Thus far, the manipulation of either ethnicity or Islam has yet to reap the large rewards sought by ambitious Yoruba politicians. Meanwhile, a Yoruba subnationalism and identity defined by Islam is in the making. It is clear that militant Islamic politics has its rich dividends, as the case of Ibadan political notables such as Alhaji Adelabu, Alhaji Eruobodo, and Alhaji Adedibu has shown. If many others resort to the strategy of these successful men, the "house of Oduduwa" an ideology constructed on the belief of a common ancestor may either collapse or become fractionalized.

With all these crises and problems in mind, the government resorted to issuing public-order regulations to prevent conflicts between Muslims and Christians. In the early 1980s, the Religious Preaching Edict was re-

vised and preachers were reminded of its existence. The aim of the edict was to regulate preaching and to ensure peace and tolerance. In 1985, fearing that the situation could degenerate into confrontations in public places and schools, the federal government banned the display of religious stickers, inscriptions, and bills in all public offices. The ban also included the amplification of religious slogans through loudspeakers located near public buildings. Public-order regulations in most states also prohibited preachers from verbally attacking one another.

The Kaduna Violence

The first most brutal confrontation between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kaduna state. It began in Kafanchan on Friday, 6 March 1987, and became the sixth most serious case of religious violence in the 1980s. It immediately spread to other cities in Kaduna and further to Kano. It lasted ten days and ended with military and police takeovers of the cities. The enmity between the opposing groups lingers.

The intensity of the hatred generated by the crisis has made it difficult to reconstruct the series of events that triggered the violence. What is certain is that the immediate cause was a disagreement between two different Islamic and Christian groups in the Kafanchan Advanced Teachers College. The controversy revolved around one Rev. Abubakar Bako, a Christian preacher who was alleged to have misinterpreted verses of the Qur'an and falsified the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad. As we shall see in chapter 9, Bako actually said nothing newbitter and ugly words had been exchanged by preachers of both religionsbut he was at the wrong place at the wrong time, and the divided community he addressed chose to resolve their problems through violence.

The files on religious activities at the Kafanchan Advanced Teachers College contain documents that, while they can hardly explain the crisis, shed some light on it nevertheless.

48 The school had long been aware of the diversity of religious groups among its students. It devised an arrangement whereby they could preach publicly with permission. Fairness to both religions, rather than conflict prevention, seems to have been behind the school's regulations, but at any rate, they tried to allow all religious groups to operate. In early 1987, the system appears to have been working well. A revivalist Christian group at the college was granted permission to carry out a week-long celebration on campus these festivals are a common activity on Nigerian college campuses, and they are often characterized by collegial

one-upmanship. The Christian group called their festival Mission '87, and its theme that year was "Going Home." Events scheduled for 5-8 March consisted mainly of religious songs, testimonies, film shows, prayers, drama, and counseling. The counseling was to take place on Friday night, 6 March, and was to be presided over by Bako. Bako was a former Muslim, who had some in-depth understanding of the Qur'an and Islam. After his conversion, Bako became committed to the spread of Christianity in the north, and his life ambition became to inspire others, especially Muslims, to convert to Christianity. Some Muslim students felt that the invitation of Bako was meant to antagonize them. While antagonism may not be the right word, his choice was not unrelated to his zeal and the power of his testimony to market Christianity. The school authorities did not think that Bako's visit was dangerous and they approved the invitation. His role was to be rather small: just half an hour of counseling to people who were already Christians.

The first indication of tension was on Thursday, 5 March, when the Christian group hung a bold banner reading "Welcome to Mission '87 on Jesus's Campus" over the school's main entrance.

49 The Muslims complained, and the authorities ordered that the banner be removed. The Muslim students felt victorious, and the Christians were disappointed, but no one yet anticipated any violence.

The trouble came when, during his counseling session, Bako made references to Islam and cited the Qur'an intending to strengthen the faith of his Christian audience. In a written account of the event, Bako admitted to having cited the Qur'an in order to affirm that Jesus was the only path to salvation.⁵⁰ According to Aisah, a female student who became a key figure in the crisis, Bako misquoted and misinterpreted the Qur'an to make his points, and he abused the

Prophet Muhammad.⁵¹ She informed other Muslims that their faith was being attacked in public by the Christians, and Muslim students rushed to the scene to hear what Bako was saying.

What happened thereafter is variously reported, even by the school authorities. Christians claimed the Muslims rushed to attack them and they fought back in self-defense. The Muslims said they asked Bako to repeat himself, whereupon they challenged his authority on Islam, one Christian slapped a Muslim student, Hajia Hassan, and a small fight ensued. Both sides said their was fighting, but each claimed self-defense.

A few students went to get help from the university administration. The student affairs officer and the acting registrar rushed to the scene to calm the students. Trying to stanch the growing anger of the Muslim students, the administrative officers asked Bako to apologize to them. His

Christian sponsors asked him not to do so; instead, they demanded that the Muslims be ordered to withdraw to the dormitory. Having failed to negotiate with the Christians, the officers turned to the Muslims, appealing to them not to fight. The student affairs officer, realizing the volatility of the situation, rushed into town to request the intervention of respected malams. They arrived too late, and both groups had begun throwing stones at one another. The student affairs officer became one of the first victims of the riot: he was beaten, his skull was fractured, and his car was badly damaged.

Without any authorities present to stop the crisis, it progressed quickly to full scale. Other students joined in the free-for-all, and sixteen students (six Muslims and ten Christians) were seriously injured. The Muslims went off to tear apart a nearby church, and the Christians set the school mosque and its Qur'ans on fire. No one slept. Students fled to the town, not for safety, but to mobilize additional support. When news reached the town, old disputes were reopened among the various ethnic groups who had complaints with the local government and the emir. For others, the crisis was just an opportunity to raid and loot. With no decisive intervention from the police, and with no one to tell the public about what had transpired, the town was thrown into mass confusion.

The emir and his officers were unable to pacify the townspeople. The emir lost control, and was able to talk only with the Muslims, many of whom had gathered in his palace. For three days, Kafanchan became a battlefield.

52 Crowds congregated in battalions. Some set up roadblocks, others set about destroying the town. On Saturday, Muslims and Christians exchanged volleys of stones and set vehicles on fire. The Challenge Bookshop, the town's major outlet for Christian literature, was invaded and looted. The College was closed and all students ordered

to vacate the campus. On Sunday morning, Christians beat two Muslims accused of planning to burn their churches. Confrontations ensued in different parts of the town, as people fought one another with primitive weapons and guns. Unlike in Zaria or Kano, the Christians constituted the majority population in Kafanchan (about sixty percent) and were able to put more men into action.

Casualties were high. Many were badly injured and eleven people were killed. Many were rushed to the Kafanchan General Hospital with multiple injuries including knife and machete cuts. Lacking an adequate supply of drugs, the hospital could not help everyone. Stores and granaries were destroyed. The Kafanchan Motel was set on fire. A brickmaking business, including its equipment and trucks, was destroyed. Rioters marched to the College to burn the houses of the head of the Hausa Department

and the vice-principal. Twenty cars were burned. The town's main market was besieged with massive looting. Also destroyed were food supplies, stores of fertilizer, two gas stations, and scores of livestock.

53 Townspeople fled for their lives, bringing a few valuables with them; many left for the neighboring states of Sokoto and Bauchi.

The police were unable to cope with the crisis on their own. On Monday morning, anti-riot policemen were dispatched to Kafanchan in large numbers to man the remaining mosques and churches, to protect the roads, and to ensure the safety of people. Crowds were dispersed, and a curfew was imposed in the hope of restoring calm. According to the Kaduna state government, the police managed to restore peace by the third day. While I do not wish to minimize the role of the police, it should also be noted that after three days of violence, the sleepless participants had reached the point of fatigue, and had completely destroyed most of their enemies' property.

By the weekend, following reports of calm in Kafanchan, Kaduna Governor Umar was ready to announce to the people of his state that the crisis was under control and that similar crises would be prevented. His government, he warned, would not tolerate "hypocritical religious fanaticism, tribal sentiments and general acts of lawlessness."⁵⁴ He appealed for peaceful coexistence, citing both the Qur'an and the Bible:

There is no religion I know of in this world that advocates violence. On the contrary all religions advocate peace, harmony, tolerance, patience, understanding and good neighborliness. In fact, the Koran categorically states that even if there are unbelievers living amongst you who wish to live in peace you should by all means live in peace with them. This encapsulated the degree to which Islam advocates peace not only amongst members of the same religion, community or race but amongst members of

various communities, races or religions.

And in effect, Islam teaches us that there is no compulsion in religion. This necessarily implies that a number of religions exist and people are free to choose their own religion but peace should form an integral part of that religion. The Bible propagates the same phenomena of peace when it says, and I quote, "Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God" (St Matthew Chapter 5, verse 9). "If possible so far as it depends upon you, live peacefully with all men." (Romans Chapter 12, verse 18) "But God has called us to peace." (First Corinthians, Chapter 7 verse 15).

All these are clear indication of the fact that both Islam and Christianity and indeed all other religions have as integral part of their fundamental objectives such virtues as peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and respect.⁵⁵

He added a veiled threat, which is a typical reaction of the military to such situations, that his government would deal with rioters with decisiveness and force. He concluded with a reassurance that the situation was now calm and that he hoped that the state would never again witness that kind of incident.

As the governor was polishing his speech, Muslims were busy organizing mobilizations against Christians elsewhere. Muslims who heard that Rev. Bako had denigrated the Qur'an in Kafanchan decided that it was time for war, not for reconciliation, and the governor's words fell unheard on their ears. To those among them who saw the Kafanchan riots as a victory for the Christians, it was time for revenge. Indeed, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, a well-established pro-Islam radio station, broadcast exaggeratedly that many Muslims had been killed in Kafanchan, and that their houses and mosques were burned. This broadcast fueled a raging fire.

The reconciliatory governor continued to hold out hope that he could contain the crisis by pacifying all the religious groups. In a public speech at Kafanchan, he said that a multiplicity of groups in the local government of Jema'a had been living in peace for decades, and that "it was improper to say a particular tribe or religious group perpetrated the destruction of lives and properties."

56 The governor was unable to satisfy anyone in Kafanchan, where the people were more interested in pointing fingers. Very rapidly, the violence spread to other places, where it acquired all the characteristics of the Kafanchan outbreak. But whereas Christians had been strong in Kafanchan, they were to be bested in other places. Many Muslims, mostly youth, organized in small groups to attack Christians in Kaduna, Zaria, Samaru, Wusasa, Kankia, Malufanshi, Katsina, and Funtua, all in Kaduna state. Their targets included churches and residential houses, Christian-owned business and

property, and people. By the time the violence abated, 113 churches had been burned to the ground.⁵⁷

The Catholic Junior Seminary at Basawa and the Basawa Teachers College were both attacked and set on fire. In Zaria, the Muslims, mainly students of Ahmadu Bello University, were agile and very organized, burning the houses and cars of many Christians. Large numbers of businesses and houses in Sabon Gari, a largely immigrant neighborhood, were destroyed. The Soho Guest Inn and the Silva Hotel were set ablaze. A pharmacy belonging to an Igbo Christian, was looted and set on fire. The owner of the pharmacy did not understand why he was attacked: "If they were looking for drinking places and prostitutes, what did they want with my chemist?"⁵⁸ A church, Jesus's Peoples Mission, was badly damaged. In addition, fifteen vehicles, all belonging to non-Muslims, were destroyed.⁵⁹ A

number of prominent Christians were targeted, including the family of General Gowon, the country's military leader from 1966 to 1975. Gowon's house was destroyed, and his brother, who was crippled in one leg, was lucky to escape. At the end of it all, almost every Christian place of worship, hotel, and bar in the older parts of Zaria were destroyed. Movable furniture from these buildings was dragged into the streets and burned, and then the buildings themselves were set on fire. In the adjoining village of Samaru, where Ahmadu Bello University is located, bars and hotels including the popular Rockey Roy Club were destroyed in similar fashion.

The Zaria police watched helplessly as lives and property were destroyed. The Christians felt betrayed by the police. According to a delegation of the Christian Council of Nigeria who visited Zaria, the Christians were very bitter about this police inaction.

60 The army was mobilized to bring calm to Zaria, but as in the case of Kafanchan, they came too late, after most of the intended damage had already been done. Soldiers were posted at mosques. Regular services were disrupted, and even Muslims were afraid to attend the Friday jumat. The army and police searched for suspects and sealed off many parts of the city. Gas stations were closed, to prevent people from buying fuel for burning houses.

The survivors of the Zaria crisis blamed the police for not protecting them.⁶¹ Those who were lucky enough to escape sought refuge in military barracks, where they were received less than hospitably.⁶² Many moved hastily back to the south. An Igbo trader who had lived in Zaria for eighteen years said her only remaining option was to leave the city, because she did not know what would happen next.⁶³

Kaduna was disrupted by widespread violence similar to that which

had occurred in Zaria. The police and the army mounted joint patrols, hoping that their displays of men and arms would scare off protesters. Here and in other troubled spots, the police and the army searched motorists for concealed weapons. In Kano, Christian students at Bayero University were attacked. On learning about the Kafanchan incident, Muslim students invaded their Christian colleagues on the evening of Tuesday 10 March. Lecturers who voiced their opposition to the attacks, or who otherwise identified with the Christians, were similarly attacked, and their cars damaged.⁶⁴ The houses of a few lecturers were invaded, and those who were discovered were dragged out and beaten. Christian students fled the campus to seek refuge in churches and private homes. The University was closed down, but this left the remaining property of Christian students vulnerable to destruction by Muslims, who were able to return to the dormitories. The crisis quickly spread to the city itself, where Christians and Muslims fought,

were injured, and had to be hospitalized. The police warned the Christians in Kano to go into hiding, further directing members of Christian associations not to drive visibly marked vehicles without police escort.

65

In both Kano and Kaduna states, all the schools were closed to prevent younger students from participating in the violence and from becoming victims. Parents with children in the north panicked as rumors spread. Northbound movement slowed down. Southern motorists stayed put for fear of losing their vehicles. Rail service, too, was affected, and many people chose not to travel at all. Market activities were paralyzed for almost eight days in Kaduna, Funtua, Zaria, and Katsina, and stores were closed for fear of looting. Prices shot up. Southbound traffic increased as people left affected towns to return to their ethnic homelands. Transportation costs increased fivefold.

Christians in central Nigeria and in northern cities mobilized to defend themselves, organizing vigilante groups to ward off Muslim attacks.⁶⁶ To many Christians, participation in vigilante activities was a turning-point in their reconciliation with violence. Before that time, many Christians had hoped that clam, prayer, and fasting would suffice,⁶⁷ but they now began to speak of the law of Mosesan eye for an eye. They voiced determination to physically defend their lives, houses, families, and property. This mood has not abated, and the use of violence is now regarded by Christians as a legitimate defense.

The crisis ended in heavy losses to the Christians. Across the region, 152 churches (as compared to five mosques) were burned, most notably in Kafanchan, Zaria, Kaduna, Wusasa, Funtua, and Katsina. Christians suffered the most damage in Zaria, where the Muslims

overpowered and devastated them. In Kaduna, they were able to mobilize faster to protect themselves, thereby minimizing their losses. At no other time in the country's history had Christians suffered so great a loss. Commenting on what he saw in the north, Charles William, the secretary of the Christian Council of Nigeria, concluded that "it showed that the devil was seriously at work for people to have burnt down churches and Holy Bibles."⁶⁸ In Kano, the state CAN branch compiled a list of atrocities committed against its members in a widely circulated press release, which reminded all Christians again that their lives were in danger.⁶⁹

The riots sent a loud and clear message to Christians: northerners could not openly profess Christianity and escape unharmed. Their choices were few. Should they abandon their religion and convert for the sake of peace? They would not capitulate in this way. Rather, they would strengthen their faith, seeking stronger ways to confront the Muslims the next time.

During the crisis, and long after it was over, Christian leaders and organizations made it clear in word and deed that they were deeply offended, and that their faith was under attack. The Muslims, they said, had provoked them. CAN began to organize its leadership to address the problem. CAN called on the military government to take urgent steps to end the riots, saying that otherwise the Christians would have to conclude that Muslims had made up their minds to eliminate them in the north. They demanded that the federal government guarantee the freedom of worship and the safety of all churches. CAN warned that to Islamize the country, as was being demanded by some Muslims, would be a dangerous undertaking.

70 In Kaduna state, CAN advised all Christians to stay out of work until peace returned, and to take the time to sympathize with those who had lost their lives and churches. The Rt. Rev. Gbonigi, Anglican Bishop of the Kaduna Diocese, told the government that Christians would not work until sanity was restored. He asked them to convene in churches every day to pray for peace.⁷¹

The Catholic bishops issued a press release on 17 March requesting that the government conduct a balanced investigation into the crisis, and that it vow to punish all those who were involved. Such an investigation, they advised, must uncover all the manifold causes, and sanctions should be imposed on those who were responsible. Believing that Christians were the only victims of the violence, the bishops concluded that "it would be tragic if any segment of the nation were to start having the feeling that the government is either unable or unwilling to defend and protect their civil rights and more so their religious rights."⁷²

Protestants joined in the postcrisis protestations. The Anglican Church voiced shock at the crisis. They asked Christians to remain calm and

to exercise restraint so that violence could be contained. Sympathy was extended to all victims. Unlike CAN, the Anglican Church avoided combative language, choosing instead to sympathize with the government and to urge it to be guided by the advice of a panel of inquiry that would look into the crisis.⁷³ The Christian Council of Nigeria sent a five-man delegation to visit all the affected places and to console Christians. Church leaders began to call for a great Christian revival to surmount what they called the devil represented by Islam. They said Christians should keep calm but protect themselves. What was needed to prevent conflicts, according to Dr. S. T. Ola Akande, the Chairman of CAN, Oyo State Branch, was for all religious leaders to engage in dialogue on a regular basis.

Thereafter, speeches and complaints by religious leaders became commonplace. Accusations and counteraccusations ricochet off one another.

CAN became more active in documenting cases of atrocities against Christians. On several occasions, they went through the media to remind Babangida of his mandate to protect religious freedom and put an end to the "sadistic and destabilizing operations" of Muslims like church-burning and property destruction.

74 Christians and other non-Muslim analysts wondered whether the military regime of Babangida was committed to upholding a secular constitution at all. They said that the violence made a mockery of that constitution, and they scorned Muslim demands for an Islamic state. JNI and Muslim leaders interpreted the crisis differently: Christians, they said, were solely to blame and deserved severe punishment. The police and army, who Muslims said were dominated by the Christians, killed and injured innocent Muslims. According to Gumi:

These Christian soldiers or policemen think that since some Moslems burnt a church they must punish all Moslems. Some Moslems were sleeping on their beds and taken away by soldiers and policemen. Not just taken but killed. Innocent people were arrested and killed with guns in their own rooms and houses. I know two cases one of them was even an Imam who was coming out of a mosque, and he was shot and killed. I don't know if it was a soldier or policeman who did this.⁷⁵

The Government and the Crisis

The state and federal governments responded to the crisis in familiar ways, condemning rioters and advising Nigerians to pursue peace. But this time around there were two new dimensions to their reaction. The government sought to diminish the role of religion in the crisis, as they had done in the Maitatsine riots. If this diminishment was intended to curtail the spread of the riots, it only reinforced the belief among the Christians that the Babangida administration was pro-Islam and dishonest about it as well. How else, they asked, were they

expected to interpret the burning of their churches?

The other added dimension was the government's interpretation of the violence as political. Babangida had been forced to rush back to Nigeria from a trip to France, embarrassed that the Nigerian security and stability that he had been advertising to foreign governments had so prominently failed to evidence themselves. He had left for France feeling that he had a grip on power and that his lieutenants were loyal, and he was rudely awakened from this fantasy. What his security men told him we may never know, but he arrived home on 16 March to what he saw as an attempted coup.

Unlike other coups, in which power-hungry individuals or groups directly attack a standing regime to seize power, this coup, as he saw it, was organized by civilians who sought to topple his government indirectly, by destabilizing the country:

Police investigations have shown that while the fracas in Kafanchan might have been religious in origin, the wanton destruction of lives and property in Kaduna, Zaria, Katsina, Funtua and other places in Kaduna State were carefully planned and master-minded by evil men with sinister motives who saw the incident in Kafanchan as an opportunity to subvert the Federal Military Government and the Nigerian nation. . . . What we are dealing with, therefore, is not just a religious crisis but rather the civilian equivalent of an attempted coup d'etat organized against the Federal Government and the Nigeria nation.

76

Rather than come out into the open and fight their own wars, his perceived enemies sought the services of young men to instigate riots. As to why anyone would want to overthrow him in such a roundabout way, his answer was resoundingly propagandistic: the country was doing too well, he said, and his enemies wanted to disorganize his successful programs. Nothing, he continued, would stop him from improving the economy and executing his other programs. Trying to sound tough, he boasted that his administration was equal to the challenge posed by any individual or group and he was determined to maintain the unity of the country:

The peace, happiness and harmony of the Nigerian nation are far greater than any group interest within the Nigerian society. . . . We cannot stand by and allow a group of ambitious and mindless power-seekers to push us into yet another civil war. The Federal Military Government and the Nigerian Armed Forces are, therefore, prepared to go to any extent to stamp out the evil men in our midst who appear determined to wreck the peace of our

country and our economic revival which is just beginning to take place across the nation, to the advantage of the masses of our people, especially the neglected rural majority.

In a broadcast to the entire nation, he assured Nigerians of continued religious freedom, security and protection for all to worship, and compensation for the victims of the violence. As if in response to CAN's demands, he promised that his government would regard those who objected to religious freedom as enemies.

While the speech was tough, it was mostly rhetoric. If his government were in fact doing so well, one would think that his defenders would

have freely taken up arms against his enemies. If the role of religion were in fact minimal, one would think that churches and church leaders would not be the major targets of attacks. At the end of the day, investigators were unable to find any instigators for Babangida's imagined coup attempt. Once again, it was only Babangida who had profited from the violence, having successfully consolidated his power as a result. Watching out for their personal interests, most members of the civilian political elite steered clear of criticizing the Babangida regime or suggesting that the riots were attributable to economic deterioration. But the suffering masses were not fooled, and they saw through his lies about government performance and the impending improvement of their lot.

Babangida embarked on a number of quick fixes to the crisis. A new public-order law was enacted, and all school-based religious organizations were dissolved for a period of twelve months. Offenders were to be sentenced to a mandatory five-year prison term.

⁷⁷ This decree was to be of limited effect in the coming years, as many groups simply converted themselves into "fellowships" and met in private homes. In Kaduna state, the government strengthened the Religious Preaching Edict of 1984, providing for unauthorized or inflammatory preachers to be jailed and decertified.⁷⁸ But once again, stubborn preachers continued as they always had, largely without punitive repercussions.

Two panels of inquiry were established, one by the Kaduna state government and the other by the federal government. The state panel was known as the Donli Commission after its chair, the civil servant Hisene Donli. The Donli Commission was mandated to determine the origins, mechanisms, and instigators of the violence, and to suggest ways to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Two initial

problems beset the Committee: the Muslims objected that the chair was a woman, and Bako, a key witness and one of those accused of causing the incident, was nowhere to be found. Rumors circulated that he had fled the country, that he was dead, or that he was in hiding. Eventually, the Muslims accepted Donli's chairwomanship, Bako submitted written testimony, and the Donli Committee concluded its sitting on 15 April, submitting its report soon after. On 22 April the Kaduna State Police Command declared Bako a wanted man.⁷⁹

Various interpretations of the incident were put forward by religious and political leaders, Islamic scholars, and Muslim and Christian organizations. According to the emir of Kafanchan, Isa Mohammed, the violence was an act of terrorism by social misfits.⁸⁰ Others blamed fanatics, devils, and people possessed of "false religion." Many locals felt that while the tension had been generated partly by religion, grievances and animosities

over political and economic issues had also built up in the preceding years. Some ethnic groups had objected to making Kafanchan the capital of the local government and bringing some people like the Jema'a under the authority of the emir.

81 Religious leaders and organizations joined in apportioning blame. CAN said the Muslims were responsible, while JNI said that they were the victims of Christian persecution and destruction.

By way of solutions, the Christians entreated the state to encourage dialogue among religious leaders, to lift the ban on religious groups in schools, to pay for the rebuilding of all churches in their original locations, to waive the ban on religious radio and television broadcasts (once guidelines were made and the management of broadcasting stations were given editorial control), and to restrict the location of public address systems and loudspeakers to the walls of churches and mosques.⁸²

Gumi and some fundamentalist Muslims felt the violence was justified. Gumi threatened more of it, saying that violence was the only way for Muslims to get what they wanted. As far as he was concerned, the violence had successfully united Muslims. He used the opportunity of the riots to ridicule Christianity, describing it variously as insignificant, emotional, womanly, and oriented more toward the personal than the divine. Gumi challenged Christians to turn the other cheek from the attacks of Muslims, as their religion teaches them to do.⁸³

Radical members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities claimed that efforts to localize the crisis in religion were misleading. These university teachers said that religious violence, ethnic riots, economic riots, and all other kinds of violence were all related to the

complex of problems Nigeria faced, including hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy, corruption, and inflation. All these problems could in turn be traced to the lack of equal opportunity for Nigerians and to "bottlenecking of the economy with the metropolitan world and alienation of people from decision making process."⁸⁴ Leftist scholars at the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria blamed agents of imperialism (by which they meant Arabs and Zionists) for seeking to destabilize Nigeria and to prevent the revolution of the masses, which would initiate genuine progress.⁸⁵

The Donli Commission recommended that both the federal and state governments compensate the victims of the riots, which they decided to do. The victims submitted claims amounting to 75 million naira. The Kaduna State government received just one-third of this sum from the federal government to cover human and material losses. The Kaduna state government announced that it was unable to come up with sufficient funds to cover all the claims, and that it would only meet half of those it deemed

genuine. The compensation process turned out to be very complicated. Destroyed structures had to be reassessed by government staff. Houses that had been completely burned were difficult to value, and many homeowners had exaggerated their claims. For each of the nineteen lives that had been lost in the crisis, the state determined that would pay surviving relatives the arbitrary sum of N102,847.55.

The government also set up a five-man Disbursement Committee to verify and pay the claims. Payment began in August 1987,

86 to varied public response. While some were happy with what they received, many others complained that the money was insufficient. Voluminous paperwork was required to document victims' identity and the monetary values of damaged property. The rules favored educated people who could obtain the necessary affidavits and fill out the forms. Christians complained that the compensation was inadequate to rebuild their churches.

A second commission was set up by the federal government. Known as the Justice Karibi-Whyte Special Tribunal on Civil Disturbances, it was empowered to prosecute, but it set free a number of people for lack of evidence. Many others were sentenced to prison and hard labor for terms ranging from one to seven years, on charges of unlawful assembly, destruction of property and places of worship, rioting, and mischief by fire. Still others were jailed for circulating and distributing seditious publications and inciting violence against the government on religious grounds.⁸⁷ The Tribunal did not have an easy task. Religious groups conspired to protect their members, and some who had been singled out for prosecution could not be located.⁸⁸

Even while the Special Tribunal was in session, the animosity continued, sometimes seeming more intense than before. On 6

November 1987, a group of Muslims, including nursing mothers, staged a public demonstration in Kaduna to demand the immediate release from prison of all Muslims jailed or detained by the Special Tribunal. In addition, the protesters demanded improvements to prison services and for prisoners to be allowed a daily visitation.⁸⁹ They condemned the living conditions of Muslim prisoners: they were badly fed, and forty to seventy people were put in rooms meant for sixteen people. Some of the protestors carried placards reading "Better Conditions for Muslims in Prison," "The Dignity of Our Brothers Must Be Respected," and "Lift Ban on Visits." The protesters ignored laws that required them to obtain police permits, but before the police could disband them by force, they had achieved their goal of publicizing their complaints. For many years, Muslims complained that the tribunal had showed favoritism to Christians.

None of the tribunals and panels of inquiry of the 1980s brought an end to the religious crisis. Throughout the decade, no one investigated the activities of the various governments. Nor were religious leaders investigated. While the link between the country's poor economic performance and religion was made several times, the targets of blame remained so-called fanatics. While I have indicated the political and economic forces behind the cases of violence, it is important to note as well that theological and cultural forces were equally at work. Many Muslims and Christians began to view violence not in moral terms, but as a necessity sanctioned by religious beliefs. Indeed, many people began to think of violence as the only available and moral option for transforming the language of public discourse and for self-defense. Religious leaders continue to use the language of religious faith in the service of violence.

7

"The Age of Warfare": Violence and Conflicts in the 1990s

Nigeria is now at war with itself. . . . This is the age of warfare the war of religion, of hunger, of greed, and of power rivalry. . . . Can we survive the war?

1

Nigeria entered the 1990s in great distress. Nigerians had begun to feel as though their country was on the brink of collapse and disintegration into ruin. By 1994, many were beginning to talk of a Rwanda-like scenario where two ethnic groups would fight one another without regard for human life. The depressed mood in Nigeria stemmed from daily occurrences of tension, the impending collapse of the political system, social decay, and intense religious violence.

No solution was found to the religious conflicts of the 1980s. The military regime of Babangida had become thoroughly discredited. By 1990, his words meant little, his actions were interpreted as deceitful, and his only ambition was to stay in power for as long as he could. His wife's obsession with public attention and clothes brought additional ridicule upon herself and her pet government program, "Better Life for Rural Women." The economy had become devastated. The only hope that the people had was that Babangida himself would leave office and a new Third Republic would bring changes. But one fear was expressed over and over again: that the religious divide would make a Third Republic impossible.

Analysts began to compare Nigeria with Iran, Iraq, India, Afghanistan,

and Northern Ireland and to warn that the country's religious troubles would prevent national cohesion and progress. In public and private, apprehensions were expressed as to the possible outcome of religious conflicts. Many began to talk of the destruction of the national psyche and the Nigerian unity.

2 Nigeria was prophesied to follow the path of Lebanon and Sudan.

This fear was justified, even if the prophecy has not been fulfilled. Two interconnected aspects of religion and the state in the 1990s have been responsible for the continuance of violence and its consequences on the political process. I shall examine both in this chapter. The violence of the 1990s was as devastating as that of the 1980s, and was worse in some ways. More incidents of violence occurred more than ever before: in 1991 and 1992, a major incident occurred every four months on the average. More damage was done to lives and property. So devastating was the violence of the 1990s that the Nigerian state appeared to have lost total control over the situation. Several cases of violence were continuations of previous clashes between Muslims and Christians, others were directed at the state itself, and there was a largescale communal-religious outbreak in Kaduna state. I shall take up all of the major outbreaks in turn.

Confronting the State: Yakubu Yahaya and the Katsina Riot, 1991

During the last week of March 1991 and continuing into April, the city of Katsina, the capital of Katsina state, laid in wait for an imminent largescale outbreak of religious violence. It came on 19 April, but unlike previous incidents, the Katsina riot lasted just one day. At the center of the violence was Malam Yakubu Yahaya, a preacher who challenged the state's government to a fight. Like the Maitatsine, the Katsina event was a case of violence involving a well-

known leader with radical views. Unlike the case of the Maitatsine riots, the government and its security forces were fully prepared for battle in Katsina.

Yakubu Yahaya was the leader of a large Muslim group in Katsina.³ Innocent-looking but tough, Yahaya was able to popularize the beliefs of Nigerian Shiites through his intransigence and his challenge to the governor of the state. Yahaya was a preacher of modest means. He lived modestly in a small mud house in the town. His living room had only a mat, a standing fan, and a large poster of Ayatollah Khomeini, which he described as his most valuable possession.⁴ He spoke only limited English, but he was a highly educated person in the Islamic tradition and in formal Arabic

studies. He learned the Qur'an and the Arabic language under his father, after which he went to the Arabic Islamic College in Kaduna for four years. Thereafter, he traveled to Maradi in the Niger Republic to preach. A few years later, he went to Bayero University in Kano to obtain a diploma in Arabic Studies, which qualified him to teach Arabic and Islamic education at the Katsina Teachers College. In the 1980s, he began to show his strength as a fearless anti-government preacher. He was once arrested by security agents for his volatile teachings. He resigned his teaching appointment in 1983 to take to full-time preaching. With a base at Katsina from which he drew his students and followers, he traveled frequently to Kano, Katsina, Maiduguri, Potiskum, Makurdi, and other places to spread the Shiite gospel.

5 At this time a young man in his thirties, Yahaya was able to attract younger followers and to develop both their zeal and commitment to the religion.

Although his hero was Khomeini, he rejected attempts to divide Muslims through Shiite, as he regarded sects as potentially too divisive:

I can say that there is nothing like Shi'ite in Nigeria. . . . I know that the Jews always try to divide Muslims into groups. Whenever a movement is raised to work for Islam, they try to give it a name in order to make people avoid it . . . to divide Muslims into groups, to disunite us.⁶

One of his followers, Mohammed Amin, a graduate of Kaduna Polytechnic, said that the sect's relations with Khomeini did not make them Shiites, and that Khomeini was just a person whom Allah used to fulfill a promise that whenever Islam experienced a drawback, someone would emerge to raise it up. Like Khomeini, Yahaya believed that he was sent by God to end injustice, oppression, and

exploitation in Nigeria.

Labels aside, Yahaya and his followers believed strongly that the Nigerian government must be changed, if necessary by force, as had happened in Iran, Lebanon, and Bahrain. Yahaya did not see himself as the Mahdi, or even as the leader of a new Islamic state. He acknowledged the leadership of another person, Malam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky of Zaria, a prominent preacher and a notable critic of the government. Al-Zakzaky is a veteran protester. As a student at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria in the 1970s, he was at the forefront of the Muslim Students Society, rising to the position of deputy chairman and organizing a series of pro-Islamic lectures and campaigns. Following unrest on campus, he was expelled on 14 December 1979. He turned his full energies to the propagation of Islam, calling for the overthrow of the Constitution and an Islamic revolution.⁷ In widely circulated cassettes, al-Zakzaky had criticized emirs, governors, presidents,

politicians, and soldiers.

8 He was opposed to secular authority. One influential cassette that documents al-Zakzaky's beliefs identifies him clearly as a Shiite:⁹ he says Muslims must say the *shahada* confession of faith ("There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger"), adding the line "and Ali is the friend of God," a Shiite trademark. Shiites believe that Caliph Ali was the true successor of the Prophet Muhammad, a position with which the rival Sunni disagree. Al-Zakzaky goes on in the cassette to affirm that the Mahdi would soon appear to save Islam, resonating with the Shiite belief that the twelfth and last Imam will redeem the world. He says Nigeria must become like Iran, "the only country in the world today where Satan has no place to hide." The Nigerian governments, al-Zakzaky continues, "are under kaffir, thieves, and satans." He rejects the Nigerian Constitution:

Does the Nigerian constitution recognize the law of Allah? Does it recognise the Quran as the supreme law? A section of this constitution you are referring to says that its laws are supreme whatever law that is not consistent with its provisions, are null and void. Now we know for sure that the laws of that constitution run contrary to the provisions of the Quran. So, according to Nigeria's constitution the Quran is null and void. And it will be a contradiction, for anybody who accepts the laws of the Quran accepts Allah as the Lord and accepts Muhammed (SAW) as the messenger of Allah too, at the same time, accept the constitution of Nigeria. . . . We want Islam and no power on earth can stop it.¹⁰

For his combative style and provocative preachings, al-Zakzaky had a series of confrontations with the law, and by 1989, he had spent a total of eight years in jail. His releases from prison were always met by welcoming crowds of thousands of his followers, who included among them university students and lecturers.

On 25 March 1991, Yahaya marched at least two thousand of his

followers to the Katsina office of the *Daily Times*, chanting "La ilahah il'Allah" (there is no God but Allah), "Down with *Daily Times*," and "Down with the Federal Government." His mission was simple: to take possession of every remaining copy of the December 1990 edition of *Fun Times*, a humor magazine published by the *Times*. The offending edition contained an opinion poll that asked whether or not respondents would marry prostitutes who repented and became "born again Christians." In addition, there was an article on prostitution that investigated the origins of prostitution and argued that many women had abandoned the profession to lead decent lives. The author supported certain claims with references to the Bible and

the Qur'an. Mary Magdalene, according to this writer, used to be a prostitute before she became a strong follower of Christ, and the Prophet Muhammad had made love to a woman of easy virtue whom he later married.

How this issue of *Fun Times* reached the hands of al-Zakzaky or Yahaya and their sect has been obscured by time, but they were extremely angered by it. Both the *Daily Times* and *Fun Times* were owned by the federal government, and the attack on Prophet Muhammad was believed to have been endorsed by either the government or some of its high-ranking officials.

11 On 25 March Yahaya and his followers burned all remaining copies of the offending magazine. It was an otherwise peaceful protest, in which no one was hurt and no property was damaged.¹² The police did not disturb the protest march, nor did they come to the aid of the *Daily Times* office. By then Yahaya had already become popular, according to police records.¹³ He was not known to have caused much trouble, although his record at that time said that "he is capable of doing this because of his preachings and because many of his followers are young and idealistic."¹⁴ This capability had been demonstrated two years earlier. In 1989, a Yahaya disciple was arrested and charged in court. On the day of the hearing, over a thousand "angry-looking and desperate young men" converged on the court, chased out the magistrate and freed the accused disciple.¹⁵ A similar incident in the small town of Kankia was also attributed to Yahaya, although police reports were divided on the attribution.¹⁶

Whether or not the incident of 25 March would have died down, Colonel John Madaki, the Christian governor of Katsina, saw it as the beginning of a long protest. He had no evidence, only a suspicion.¹⁷ The leading officials of Katsina state regarded Yahaya as a Shiite, the

leader of "a bunch of fanatical Muslims" whose goal was to overthrow the government at any cost.¹⁸ The governor's action turned what had begun as a small protest into a major crisis that would cause him sleepless nights and two trips to see the president in Lagos. The governor went public with an angry speech:

The leader of the Shi'ites should be aware that I, Madaki, am not afraid of him. I swear to Almighty God in heaven, if he causes trouble again . . . we will go to his house, take him to the Polo Ground and kill him publicly.¹⁹

This threat provoked anger from Yahaya. He dared the governor to carry out his threat, asserting that he would protest in the city whenever he wanted and whenever he disagreed with government policy. He was not afraid of death, and he told the governor that "a true Muslim should not fear death . . . fear has no meaning in Islam."²⁰ He feared neither Madaki nor

Babangida, but only the anger of Allah. Yahaya went even further than had the governor, whom he accused of foolishness, asserting that he was not bound by secular law:

I am a Muslim. I have the injunctions of Prophet Mohammed. I have the Holy Qur'an and I am schooled in Islamic Science which my 'ulama taught me. I am under these rules. I am following it and I am not working for anybody. I do not recognise any authority on me but the Holy Qur'an. I do not recognize the Federal Government. I do not recognize the State government and their laws. Whatever my religion permitted me to do, I will do it without waiting for any permission or without considering whether somebody likes it or not. I will never seek anybody's permission at all. . . . Do not be surprised we are using our own model of justice. The Federal Government does not recognise the injunction of my Holy Prophet, neither the State government. So this is clean justice. They do their own and I will do my own. Everybody should stand on his own. They are Kaffirs.

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He expected a change soon:

There would be an islamic revolution in this country and I am certain that Governor Madaki has started laying its foundation. . . . The solution is to flush out this corrupt system and establish an Islamic state. . . . There is no compromise. The solution is not in talking on the table but to shed out all the idol worshippers and their leaders and all these evils. So our aim and target is to do so here, Insha Allah.²²

One of his disciples added that

this imperialist system has to be changed to an Islamic system. What Islam recognises is that the people who are to lead must be those with Islamic background. Our aim is that the present leadership of the country should go and give way to Sharia which will be governed by the highly placed Islamic scholars.²³

An Islamic government, they felt, was possible in Nigeria.

Yahaya and his followers accused the governor, a Christian, of working with CAN to spread Christianity in the state and to promote secular policies.²⁴ He and the entire federal government were also accused of allowing people and the media to abuse the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims.

Yahaya did not see his procession and newspaper-burning of March 25 as constituting any threat to peace. He believed that he was only carrying out a legitimate religious duty. His justification was this:

Sometime in December, the *Fun Times* magazine had abused prophets Mohammed and Jesus. So we were angered by this and we could not tolerate this one because prophet Mohammed has been abused so many times in this country. Awolowo abused him sometimes ago saying that he was more successful and popular than Mohammed and Jesus. One Kaffir in Jos once said that we should not go to Hajj but go to Jos. Many of this. There was somebody who called himself Dauda and said prophet Mohammed sent him from Saudi Arabia in order to perform adultery with women. This is intolerable. We cannot tolerate these abuses. We went in procession and got the *Fun Times* and *Daily Times* burnt. Madaki, this so-called Governor, a foolish man, said that he would execute me for arranging the procession. I realise that the Federal Government and the State government are supporting these unbelievers in order to insult our Prophet and our religion. We will not fold our arms or shut our mouths. If everybody shuts his mouth, I will not shut mine.

25

Unknown to most people at that time was that the person with whom they had to deal with was not just Yahaya but also Malam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky of Zaria. It was al-Zakzaky who instructed Yahaya to make a bonfire of the *Fun Times* and to defy the governor.²⁶ Yahaya himself publicly admitted that al-Zakzaky was his leader and that he was under his directive: "I am doing whatever I am doing under the leadership of my master, Malam Ibrahim Zakzaky. . . . Nothing is done here without his consent. Wherever you see the burning of *Fun Times*, he is the only one behind it. . . . I am proud to be his student. He is my leader and I am under his directive."²⁷ Al-Zakzaky defended Yahaya's action:

Those who actually made the demonstration were the muslims who cared to defend the honour of the messenger of Allah and who also cared to go against the utterances of Governor Madaki and of course, Malam Yakubu Yahaya who featured prominently served as a spokesman.²⁸

Al-Zakzaky also mobilized followers in support of their cause by instructing them to head for Katsina. Within a few days, the town was flooded with hundreds of his followers. Asked why those people responded so quickly, Mohammed Ameen, a member of the group and also a lecturer at Kaduna Polytechnic, responded with great confidence:

If the leader of Islamic movement in Nigeria, Malam Zakzaky, gives an order now for the Muslims of this state to go and bring Governor Madaki to this house, I assure you that in no time he will be brought here.²⁹

Katsina became tense as members of the public feared an imminent clash between the preacher and the governor. Yahaya's followers became

more committed to their beliefs and leaders. There were problems for them and the government. The government had to deal with thousands of youth and angry Muslims who had flooded the city. All other government business had to be suspended to face an imminent security crisis.

³⁰ The governor was now being blamed for having initiated a crisis, for saying that he would kill an enemy and for choosing a strategy of "confrontation with fanatics."³¹ Newspaper editorials and civil rights movements joined in the attack on the governor for his arrogance and abuse of office. The *New Nigerian* attacked Madaki for granting himself judicial powers, asking, "where does Colonel Madaki think he is ruling: Katsina State or Soweto in South Africa?"³² The governor revised his previous statement, saying that Yahaya would not be executed, but he would face due process of law if he committed any offense.³³ He was allowed to protest if he wished, provided he did not kill or injure anyone or damage property. In addition, he distanced himself from CAN without denying his Christian identity:

I am not an agent of anybody. You will never get anybody as broad-minded as myself. I don't know of the existence of CAN. I am not working under anybody's umbrella. All I am working for is peace in Katsina. CAN did not appoint me as Governor of Katsina.³⁴

The governor said that he only wanted peace, that Yahaya was free to criticize him, that he was not afraid of him, and that he would do everything in his power to protect lives and property in the state. Yahaya had not been arrested for the invasion of the *Daily Times* office. Rather than seek compensation for damages, the newspaper carried apologies to assuage feelings.³⁵ But such pacification failed to impress Yahaya and his master; what Yahaya wanted was for the governor to appear before al-Zakzaky to revoke his death sentence

personally, and to apologize for having embarrassed the sect.³⁶

Yahaya and Al-Zakzaky, having mobilized their followers for action, felt they must either seek the means to disperse them or find avenues to explore their restlessness. Like the Maitatsine, they acquired small weapons: swords, bows and arrows, knives, catapults, stones, and clubs. Many of them wore uniforms to distinguish them from other Muslims in the town. The uniform was a white gown fronted with bold Islamic inscriptions in Arabic. They wore red armbands, headbands, and carried flags symbolizing rebellion, independence, and the call to action.

Yahaya and Al-Zakzaky felt that they could not disperse their followers without losing credibility, and so they prepared them for action. They strengthened their faith with radical preachings. They prepared them for death, offering it as "a reward, something to look forward to."³⁷ This psy-

chology proved to be a source of strength, and there was no evidence to support a security report claiming that the group had modern weapons.

38 They were bold: "we feel that we are more powerful than all the superpowers not to talk of their surrogates, the agents of the Jews."39 Like their leader, they feared only the wrath of God, and not the guns of the police. Those who might die were assured that their brothers would carry the mission to a successful end.

Their first aim was to prevent the arrest of Yahaya. Next, they would protest government policies as they had always done. Were they to be attacked by the police, they would fight back. They would not antagonize the public. Consequently, they sought ways to present themselves as peace-loving and law abiding. They printed leaflets denying that they were a violent group and saying they would never attack any private person. Referring to the incident of 25 March, they explained their justification for burning the *Fun Times* and reminded readers that they passed through the city's business center without disturbing anyone. Yahaya told a group of reporters that he was not a terrorist but a devout Muslim looking for peace for himself and his fellow-citizens.40 All Muslims were invited to join them in fighting a government of *kaffirs*, but not in terrorizing innocent people.

By the third week of April, the war of nerves between Madaki and Yahaya had given way to an overt preparation for confrontation. On 16 April, al-Zakzaky traveled to Katsina accompanied by almost two thousand followers. His entry into Katsina was cheered by thousands of people who chanted war songs and called for the head of Madaki.41 Al-Zakzaky was in town for a day or two, not to incite violence, but to instruct Yahaya to preach and to stage an unauthorized demonstration,42 no doubt an act of defiance. He instructed Yahaya to

attend the forthcoming Friday mid-day prayer of 19 April, where he was to preach his popular message of defiance of anti-Islamic laws and the call for a return to the true path.

The government responded by increasing police presence. Armored personnel carriers and many truckloads of anti-riot police began to patrol the town. Undercover agents kept a round-the-clock watch on Yahaya. The presence of heavily armed police further added to the tension, but did not scare off Yahaya and his people. The central mosque was heavily guarded, public vehicles near the building were withdrawn, and the staff of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Home Affairs, which was located close to the mosque, deserted their offices.

On 19 April Yahaya entered the crowded mosque as a hero, with his followers chanting war songs. He preached against the government and its agents, as heavily armed police watched closely. The sermon whipped Yahaya's

audience into a frenzy, and some began to shout at the police, daring them to come in and execute Yahaya. The Muslims charged the police, who fired back with heavy tear gas. The battle began as Yahaya's followers dispersed into the town. Fortunately, the protesters intended only to attack the government, not the citizenry, unlike participants in the Maitatsine or Kafanchan riots; damage was limited as a result. Three policemen were killed, and twenty-nine civilians and eight policemen were injured. Public property was damaged; the state subtreasury, the library board, and a section of the state's Ministry of Information were destroyed. Five cars were also destroyed. Yahaya and his followers withstood the tear gas, but they were not as militarily prepared as they had boasted. Their shouts of "Allahu akbar" (God is great) were met with heavy police fire.

Because the riot had been foreseen, the police were able to contain it that same day. Many people were arrested, but Yahaya escaped. On 22 April, Yahaya and a hundred of his followers surrendered to the police. A few hours later, the state government set up a five-man tribunal, headed by Justice Rabi'u Mohammed Danlami, to try Yahaya and others under the Civil Disturbance (Special Tribunal) Decree of 1987. Yahaya became the first leader of a religious riot to be tried and jailed. Al-Zakzaky was untouched, however, and the sect remain intact and continued to act as aggressively as ever.

Shiites in other parts of the country were upset, although they were unable to mobilize another violent protest. They nevertheless protested in other ways. In Yola, the capital of Gongola state, for instance, they marched through the streets singing the praises of Yahaya. In Sokoto, they circulated leaflets criticizing "pagan Nigeria" and its officials. The governors of both Sokoto and Gongola states, sensing the threat of violence, quickly mobilized police forces and issued warning threats to the Shiites. In Katsina itself, fearing that the remnants of Yahaya's movement might regroup, the police stepped up

patrols of the town.

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The Nigerian government saw Yahaya as a madman, an erroneous perception that influenced the investigation of the Justice Danlami Tribunal. The media castigated him, criticizing the government for not using security forces to hunt him down before he could cause havoc. While Yahaya's commitment to his religion is not in doubt, which fact is evidenced by the fact that he is called a fanatic, much of what he and his followers stood for is important. They sought full rejection of the British political heritage and the way in which the military authorities defined the state and projected authority. They challenged the jurisdiction of the state over them, claiming

the state was illegitimate and that public functionaries were ungodly and corrupt. They called into question the need for loyalty to the state, preferring instead loyalty to Islam and religious leaders. Madaki's threat provided them with the opportunity to test this loyalty and to reject the secular authorities. The members of the sect held Yahaya and al-Zakzaky in much greater regard than they did Madaki. Members of the sect had no confidence in a government presided over by Madaki, a kaffir, whose policies were *shirk* (anathema). Again, Yahaya reaffirmed the well-known Islamic view that government ought not be separated from religion. For those who blamed the security forces, there was little these forces could have done in a situation where the coercive apparatus of the state was not respected or feared. As soon as the members of Yahaya's sect lost their fear of death, the police and the army lost the ability to prevent the crisis. The Katsina incident demonstrates the limited power of the government to challenge a religious group and to require people to give their allegiance to a secular authority rather than a religious one. Madaki's Pyrrhic victory at the protest failed to see an end to the Yahaya sect.

Each year there has been at least one violent incident involving Shiites, mostly occurring in Kaduna, Kano, and Zaria. The movement's ability to mobilize in large numbers, sometimes of over ten thousand, on a moment's notice makes their actions difficult for the police to anticipate. Al-Zakzaky retains his respect and leadership, and he is under permanent police surveillance. As recently as September 1996, the police and the Shiites clashed in Kaduna in an outbreak that led to the deaths of two police officers and five civilians and hundreds of injuries.

44 This incident was provoked by the arrest of al-Zakzaky, who was alleged to have been importing illegal arms and to have been publishing illegal subversive material.

A particularly vehement protest took place on 20 September. Panic immediately struck the city. The police promised security to the public and issued threats to the Shiites. "If they are violent," warned the state police commissioner, "we will be violent. It is an eye for an eye."⁴⁵ The police arrested many of the protestors and charged about forty of them for disturbing the peace, unlawful assembly, and the murder of police officers. Mohammed Ciroma, a prominent leader unmoved by the police force's actions, spoke for the Shiites:

We are just trying to continue with our programme as usual, teaching Islamic philosophy and working to deliver Nigeria from this corrupt system of government.⁴⁶

Confronting the State and Christianity: The Bauchi Violence of 1991

The riots in Bauchi state from 20 to 24 April 1991 turned out to be even more disastrous than their counterparts in the 1980s. They occurred soon after the Katsina incident, as if Yahaya had planned them as revenge, but they were not engineered by Shiites. Indeed, the Bauchi riots, unlike those of Katsina, had no leader, and were not instigated by any particular sect. The immediate riots began with a confrontation drawn along both ethnic and religious lines. As was the case with the Kafanchan riot, it began with a small grievance but quickly snowballed with hostilities that had been building up for years between different ethnic and religious communities.

The crisis was triggered by a minor incident on Saturday 20 April at an abattoir in the town of Tafawa Balewa, 50 kilometers from the state capital at Bauchi. As was the case in Kafanchan, the details of that day's events have been obscured because no one wants to take the blame, but there are two main versions of the story. According to the first, a Muslim man bought beef from a Christian butcher. A Muslim who was standing by rebuked his fellow Muslim for buying beef from a cow slaughtered by an infidel, and suggested he return the meat for a refund. The butcher refused to refund his money, and a scuffle began. The second version says that a Muslim told the man who bought the beef that the Christian butcher had sold pork to him. The man who had bought the beef was so deeply offended at this deception and the violation of his religion, that without stopping to check whether it was pork or beef he had been given, he attacked the butcher and began a fight.

How did a fight between two people escalate to engulf a whole town? No one knows the details, but like the Kafanchan episode, people were drawn to the scene. Citing an eyewitness, a newspaper reporter wrote that one of the two men initially involved in the quarrel grabbed

a knife and slashed the other man's arm. Other butchers, alleged to be predominantly Christian, came to the rescue of their colleague, but they were all overpowered by a crowd of Muslims. A free-for-all melee ensued in which many were either injured or lost their lives.

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The crisis moved to the town, where Christians and Muslims attacked one another with all the weapons they could get their hands on. Many lost their lives and homes were looted, vandalized, and set on fire. The police were mere onlookers, making only feeble attempts to quell the riot. From Tafawa Balewa town the violence spread to other parts of the state and became a religious war.

The two versions of the riot's origin read like the well-known mythical creation of a precolonial Nigerian city-state or of a warrior-hero who ascended to heaven on his last day on earth. But if the origin stories are not confirmable because they are too temporally distant, the events in Tafawa Balewa are all too near. These two stories were repeated to me by more than twenty informants in 1992 and 1993, and I was taken to the abattoir and shown the very spot where it all started. The story of the fight in the abattoir was real, not a metaphor, even if the details are lost. The fight spread, and it did in fact begin the widespread violence.

The question, then, is not whether or not this event occurred in Tafawa Balewa, but why such a small event was capable of leading to such a large-scale crisis. The answer can be found in some of what I have said before, relating to economic decline in the country, religious divides and manipulation, and attempts by minorities to assert themselves. By the time the riot reached Bauchi City, it had moved beyond the original incident to encompass a general attack on southerners who were perceived to be dominating the economy of Katsina state to the detriment of the indigenes.

In Tafawa Balewa, where the crisis erupted, there was a Christian and ethnic minority, the Seyawa, who had for years complained of the domination of the Hausa-Fulani and the attempts by Muslims to make it difficult for them to practice their religion.

48 They constructed their history and themselves as people who struggle to receive education, but who could hardly use their diplomas to get good jobs and promotions. They regarded themselves as hardworking but poor.⁴⁹ However, the majority Hausa-Fulani population did not seem to see things the same way. "We oppress no one, we prevent no one from practicing their religion" was a common response to the Seyawa construction.⁵⁰ In the 1980s and 1990s, the

minorities defined politics as seeking "freedom from Hausa-Fulani oppression." In some sense, Christianity has made it possible for them to construct a powerful identity of difference from their Hausa and Fulani Muslim neighbors. To this was added a strong desire for Western education. Many were successful in life, and an elite entrepreneur class had emerged among them by the 1980s.

The minorities wanted political freedom. This turned out to be more complicated than they thought. Their number was not enough to win an election, so their only option was to forge political alliances. Even this was not all that easy. In the 1980s, the appointment of two Christian military governors, although not their own men, was interpreted as favorable to them. According to the Muslim political elite, these governors did far too much for the Christians' cause. Political tension continued into the 1990s.

The majority of the politicians in Bauchi belonged to the conservative National Republican Convention (NRC). In the December 1990 local government elections, the NRC won most of the offices, except in Tafawa Balewa, where the Social Democratic Party (SDP) took power. This victory was interpreted in religious terms: minority Christians voted for the SDP to affirm their difference. A goodly number of the Muslim political elite did interpret this not as a victory for democracy, but as an expression of anti-NRC sentiment and resentment of the majority population.

51 Muslims felt the leaders of the minorities deserved to be taught a lesson by being subjugated and brought into the fold of the NRC. The consequent violence was one way to teach the Christians a lesson.⁵²

On 20 April the riots spread to the neighboring town of Dass, where groups of Muslims fought, injured, and killed Christians, outsiders, and even locals. Many people fled the town in panic. In both places, the violence was contained not by the police or local authorities, but because the rioters' goals had already been accomplished. The number of people under attack was small, and once they fled, only their property was left to loot and vandalize. The way the Dass riots ended evidences the long-standing hostility among different groups.

The greatest calamity occurred in Bauchi City, the most heterogeneous part of the entire state. It is difficult to reconstruct how the violence spread here and why the government found it difficult to nip it in the bud, when it was aware that there were already troubles in Tafawa Balewa and Dass. There are two explanations for these questions. The first and most recent explanation holds that reports of the incidents in Tafawa Balewa and Dass spread to Bauchi City, where some Muslim groups thought that they should avenge the death of their "brothers and sisters" and that the time was ripe to attack all their

"enemies."⁵³ The other explanation was popular at the time of the crisis. On Sunday morning, three policemen escorted the vehicle that brought the corpses of riot victims in Tafawa Balewa and Dass to Bauchi to deposit them in the specialist hospital in Bauchi. The vehicle broke down within the city limits before they could reach the hospital. As the victims were being transferred to another vehicle, a crowd who had gathered heard about what had happened. Word spread that mutilated bodies and injured people from other towns were in the hospital, and that all the corpses were Muslims. Very quickly, a mob of Muslims gathered at the hospital,⁵⁴ mobilized fully for revenge.

The riots in Bauchi City involved thousands of people who scattered throughout the city wreaking havoc. The Ninth National Sports Festival was happening in the city at the same time, and media attention had al-

ready been focused on the city. Within twenty-four hours, about five hundred houses were set on fire. No firemen were available, and the houses burned to their foundations. At the Bayangeri quarter, where most of the hotels were situated, fifteen hotels were set on fire.

Bayangeri was in the modern part of the city, with good houses, roads, and amenities. Houses and cars were set on fire. The Deeper Life Bible Church in the neighborhood was set on fire, and rioters watched closely to ensure that it burned to the ground, including every last pew and book. A pharmacy was looted to the last pin, and both of the owner's cars were burned. So close was the pharmacy to police headquarters that the inaction of the police especially infuriated victims. The rioters were too many and too angry, as someone who survived the attack put it.

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Having satisfied themselves in the Bayangeri area, the rioters moved next to Hospital Road, where most of the churches in Bauchi City were located. The decision to invade this part of the city could not have been arbitrary, as it was far from the city center. All twenty churches on Hospital Road were burned. They included St. John's Catholic Church, the Basara Baptist Church, Cocin Church, Christ Apostolic Church, and St. Paul's Anglican Church. These were the cream-of-the-crop churches, with the largest congregations and best buildings in the city. The area had long been designated as a Christian zone, to separate them from the large Muslim population and thereby minimize tension. As it turned out, this only made the rioters' destruction easier.

The church was not the only symbol of bitterness. The rioters descended on all the mission houses and destroyed their property, cars, and buses, burning it all. The offices, cars, and other property of

the Christian Pilgrims Board were similarly destroyed. Only one church was spared, the ECWA church. An elder of the church attributed this to "the commitment of the people to God."⁵⁶ But the church's survival was probably attributable more to its location near the army barracks, where rioters decided that an attack could provoke military intervention. When a handful of rioters did come back a few days later, the army simply gunned them down.

Riots occurred in different locations of the city. A truckload of beer and its driver were set on fire. The streets were littered with broken bottles, stones, sticks, and damaged vehicles. Chanting anti-Christian and anti-ethnic slogans, rioters moved with weapons and gasoline against their targets. In many cases, they knew what they were looking for and what to avoid. At Tudun Wada street, home to many non-natives, certain places and people, notably the Seyawa group, were selected for destruction. Even private medical clinics were not spared, if their owners were regarded as enemies.

Casualties were high. Hundreds of homes, hotels, churches, and public buildings were burned or destroyed. While official sources initially put the death toll at eighty, mortuary figures had it at five hundred. Thousands more were injured and hundreds hospitalized. Corpses littered the streets of Bauchi City, and the threat of disease from the decomposing bodies forced health authorities to collect these corpses and bury them in mass graves outside the city. People now callous to death stood by as the corpses were piled into trucks.

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Most of the victims were killed brutally many were burned, macheted, or stoned to death; many more were decapitated.⁵⁸ A Christian medical doctor able to escape Tafawa Balewa, thinking that the rioters wanted only his death, was shocked to discover on return that his house had been vandalized, his young boy burned to death, and his mother's head smashed against the wall. He described this as "a most horrendous act of madness."⁵⁹ A twenty-five-year-old spare parts dealer narrated how his brother, Johnson, was killed on 23 April in their store:

There was smoke everywhere. I ran to the shop. I saw Johnson. He was still inside the shop. He was trying to get out. But they did not allow him to do that. One of them with a long dagger was wielding it before him. Other people used long sticks to push him back into the fire. . . . The whole shop was burning and falling down on him.⁶⁰

Activities in Bauchi City ground to a halt. The sports festival was suspended, greatly to the embarrassment of the state government. The army was called in to protect participants, who had threatened to abandon the game and head home. Offices and markets were deserted. The roads were deserted, as many people chose to stay at home. Those who were unsure whether or not they would be attacked escaped to

other places, notably the nearby city of Jos. The outsiders, who made up the majority of the victims, either ran away or sought refuge in police or army barracks. The hundreds that went to the barracks still suffered; neither food nor sleeping quarters were to be found there. When the governor inspected the city after the riot, he was moved to tears by the enormity of the destruction.⁶¹

As in previous riots, the police lost control. For three days the rioters were completely unhindered, as the police and everyone else became exclusively concerned with protecting the lives of themselves and their families. The police failed to act promptly, even when one of their own was lynched early on in the crisis. As more Muslims flooded into the city from nearby villages to join in the general destruction, they met with no police resis-

tance. As in most other cases, as soon as the rioters had finished their havoc, the police would come by to inspect, but they were powerless to stop a riot.

On 21 April, a curfew was imposed from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m., but the violence continued. Later that same day, the federal government mobilized the army, instructing them to restore law and order with the maximum force necessary. While the presence of the army brought calm, another round of violence broke out the next day. Hundreds of people were arrested in an attempt to weaken and disorganize the mobs. Muslim leaders claimed that most of those arrested were innocent, and hundreds marched to the emir's house to demand their release. The emir went to the state house to hold talks with the governor, and the mob followed him. Seeing the mob, the commanding officer thought that they were about to attack the government compound, the police, and the army. He ordered that the mob be dispersed, and many were killed and injured in the process. Interpreting their instructions perhaps too literally, the army shot anyone even suspected of attempting to burn down a building.

62 The state itself became a dispenser of brutal violence. Hundreds more people were arrested, many later to be falsely accused of participating in the riots.

More Muslims became very angry and looked for insecure places vulnerable to attack. Sporadic riots occurred on 23 April in Bauchi City. On that day and the next, hundreds gathered in the emir's palace to complain that the police and army were pro-Christian, and that Muslims should not be arrested. Violence spread to the locality of Ningi, which was not heavily policed, and where the divisional police officer, a Christian, was killed after one of his eyes had been plucked out. Five other officers were killed, and the station was burned down.

Houses of non-natives were attacked as well, and manhunts were conducted throughout the state to weed out additional outsiders.⁶³ No figures are available on the number of dead at Ningi.

The violence sent shock waves across the country. Christians were frightened by rumors that a jihad had begun in earnest to engulf the entire country. Archbishop Okogie bitterly proclaimed, "Nobody is a third rate citizen in this country; it is either we wipe ourselves out for good, or God saves who ever survives because it is going to be a religious war."⁶⁴ CAN questioned the ability of the government to protect Christians. Because many athletes from throughout Nigeria were in Bauchi at the time, national panic was heightened. In a country with undeveloped communication systems, it was impossible for most of the athletes to reach their relatives and friends. Travel to Bauchi City was impossible. The only information coming out of the city was in the form of rumors spread by people fleeing, many of which falsely reported that athletes had been killed. The Bauchi

riots were, therefore, not localized in their impact, especially in terms of the deep fear they implanted in the minds of millions of people all over the country. In some southern states, certain groups were already preparing for a retaliatory attack on Muslims. Most governors had to spend days appealing to religious leaders to calm their followers and to pray for peace.

65 The federal minister of information instructed all media under his control to downplay the crisis, leaving the public to fall on private sources of information. Although this is a familiar damage-control strategy, it usually back-fires by making the government appear deceitful and supportive of Islam. Police forces across the northern states were put on permanent alert, and major roads leading to all state capitals were monitored.

As in previous cases, a federal commission of inquiry was set up to determine the causes, remote and immediate, of the crisis. Known as the Babalakin Commission,⁶⁶ it was given four weeks to assess the damage, determine appropriate levels of victim assistance, determine the causes of the violence, and identify those who were responsible.⁶⁷ The Christian community and the media found the Babalakin Commission to be nothing but a joke, a way for the government to seem concerned without actually doing anything. Many people wondered what the government had done with the reports of previous similar commissions. Babalakin's task was nothing new, and no original proposals came out of it.

The wounds inflicted by the violence on intergroup relations in Bauchi have yet to heal fully. Thousands of residents had fled the city, leaving behind their property and their means of livelihood, and not everybody was able to recover from the loss. When the crisis was over, the governor and his leading officers and traditional rulers

appealed to southerners not to leave the state. As many sectors of the economy, especially the informal sector and retail trade, were dominated by strangers, Bauchi City suffered greatly from this withdrawal. In addition to launching a propaganda campaign insisting that peace had returned to the region, the state government promised to compensate the victims. The state hoped that the promise of compensation would lure residents back home in order to submit and defend their claims. In an unusual move, the state government sent delegations to the southeastern states of Imo and Anambra to appeal to Bauchi residents to return and resume their activities.⁶⁸ Those non-natives who have returned have found it difficult to reestablish trust with their hosts.⁶⁹ And as some indigenes complained in 1993, the "southern traders, ruthless profiteers, will never learn." Both a lack of trust on the part of non-natives and the perception of southerners as profiteers indicate that tension con-

tinues to characterize intergroup relations in Bauchi City and other parts of the state.

70 Riots could recur at any time.

Confronting Christianity: Violence in Kano, October 1991

In October, before the dust had settled from the Katsina and Bauchi riots, a massive three-day attack was launched in Kano by Muslims solely against Christians. It was a clear demonstration of the unity among many Muslims to achieve a desired objective and to show Christians in no uncertain terms that the ancient city of Kano was Islamic. A Christian minority also attempted to assert itself, but while willful, it did not have the means to accomplish its goal.

There is no confusion as to the immediate cause of this violence. The Christian Association of Nigeria had invited a German preacher, the evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, to preach in Kano. Many Muslims originally objected not to the preacher's visit or to what he might say, but to the venue—the popular, enormous, and public Race Course—and to the aggressive publicity given the event. Some few months before, an Islamic organization had invited a preacher to use the same place, but it was not granted permission by the government. Thus, when it became known that CAN was to be allowed to use the Race Course for its event, Muslims were enraged.⁷¹

To the state government, not wishing to foment unrest, but recognizing that CAN had a constitutional right to hold a crusade, decided that CAN would have to change the location of its meeting. CAN had meanwhile circulated notices and posters inviting people to the Race Course. Perhaps the crisis would have been averted if the government had offered to publicize the change of venue. But CAN's already-printed materials had already antagonized the Muslims, the

more militant among whom felt the infidel was challenging them.⁷² As if to defy the Muslims and demonstrate their own strength, the Christians embarked upon a renewed publicity campaign for the crusade, using public-address systems and posters to announce to the people of Kano that Jesus Christ would be coming to the city to save souls.

In spite of appeals from the emir of Kano, the governor, and others, and despite assurances that CAN would not hold its crusade at the Race Course, tension in the city remained high. Muslims now demanded that the crusade be cancelled entirely. In retrospect, officials have admitted that

such a cancellation, or at least a rescheduling of the crusade, would probably have stayed the violence,

73 but to take this option would have risked offending the Christians and putting Muslim politicians in a position to make additional demands. Muslim leaders said that Christians had polluted the city by raising the name of Jesus over that of Prophet Muhammad, that the minority Christian element was acting outside its place.⁷⁴

Widespread riots broke out on Monday 14 October. Official sources reported twelve deaths and large numbers of injuries. Thirty-four houses, one church, and one mosque were burned. Forty-two shops, four hotels, fifteen cars, eight trucks, and nine motorcycles were also set ablaze. Many public buildings were damaged.⁷⁵

The governor imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew that very day, but the curfew order was ignored; early the next day, the governor went on the air with an appeal to the Muslims to calm down and exercise restraint. This appeal was also ignored. Later in the evening, he made another broadcast, this time threatening to call in the army. The consequences of this action, he warned, would be grave.⁷⁶ But his threats fell on still-deaf ears, and fighting continued in Sabongari (the non-natives' neighborhood) between indigenes and non-natives. Christians and southerners abandoned their homes, fleeing to the air force base and police barracks. Additional police forces were drafted from neighboring states, but the situation could still not be controlled. One senior police officer pleaded with the non-natives: "Even if the police failed, God would not fail you. We are here to restore peace."⁷⁷ Babangida once again had to rush home from abroad, abandoning the Commonwealth Summit of Heads of Government in Harare, Zimbabwe. It took days of reinforcement from anti-riot police squads to restore order.

The crisis was unprecedented in Kano state. Religious crisis was hardly a stranger to the state, but the sole targeting of Christians for destruction on such a massive scale was something new. State and federal government officials began damage-control initiatives in earnest, seeking to placate non-natives without offending indigenous Muslims. A probe was instituted, promises of compensations were offered, and the business of government went on as usual.

The Kano crisis did recur three years later, when a Christian was beheaded in 1995 by a Muslim mob who accused the man and his wife of desecrating the Qur'an. The violence escalated further over a fracas between a Muslim and an Igbo trader. Widespread riots occurred. As in previous cases, much damage was done before peace could be restored.

The Kano incidents reveal the deep tension between minority Christians and the majority Muslims and the competition between indigenes

and southerners. The government laid the blame for the Kano violence at the feet of misguided individuals. This is far from the truth while every outbreak of violence certainly provides opportunities for looting, it is preposterous to make that sort of activity a motive for religious riots. While young people, thugs, and looters inevitably join in the violence, they are hardly ever instigators.

Most such cases of violence are preceded by long period of discontent with the government from Islamic leaders, who usually point to societal decadence, rising poverty, unemployment, and materialism. Modern Kano was perceived as degenerate and in desperate need of change. The city is always ripe for revolution. Compounding this problem were unaccounted-for declines in economic fortunes and a lack of opportunities for young people. While the government was blamed for these, some also say that southerners compounded the problems by taking a "big share of our market."

78 Manipulative Kano politicians find it easier to tell poor people that the outsiders are their enemies. As a result, whenever frustration reaches the breaking point, the outsiders come under attack.

Religion and Ethnic Nationalism: Violence in Zangon-Kataf, 1992

On Thursday, 14 May 1992, one year after the riots in Katsina and Bauchi, another incident broke out in Zangon-Kataf, a small town in southern Zaria in Kaduna state. Muslim Hausa and Kataf Christians engaged in a conflict so bitter and so destructive that the 1987 Zaria crisis paled in comparison. Everything of value was completely destroyed in Zangon-Kataf in the spring of 1992 before the violence spread to the capital city of Kaduna.

The violence of May 1992 was the culmination of an age-old conflict between two groups divided by both ethnicity and religion, the

Muslim Hausa and the Christian Kataf. For both groups, the violence was an expression of nationalism, a defense against what each group viewed as an assault on its collective identity by the other. Five days before the crisis, the Zangon-Kataf branch of the Nigerian Aid Group of the Jama'atu Izalatul Bidi'a Ikamatus Sunna, representing the Hausa, wrote to Ibrahim Dasuki, sultan of Sokoto, to alert him that a war was imminent in the town:

As you all know, we moslems in northern Nigeria are patient, peace loving as directed by God. But if we are pressed to the wall, it is possible that the Jihad in Nigeria will begin in Zangon-Kataf. And the moslem if he is killed in such

a venture as the Jihad will go to heaven because it is God's war. Consequently God has directed all moslems to ensure that moslems put their heads together and achieve this goal as directed in the Holy Qur'an.

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The Kataf, for many years, had been preparing for trouble.⁸⁰ By the 1990s, they had already become irritated at what they perceived as the "ruthless machinations of the Hausa to liquidate them."⁸¹ Hausa and Kataf alike were prepared for a confrontation.

The atmosphere in Zangon-Kataf had always been charged. Inter-communal conflicts had broken out sporadically for years. The Kataf believed that the Hausa minority marginalized them at all times, abusing their power to take land, dominate resources, and exploit the Kataf, quashing their political and economic ambitions. The emir of Zaria, overlord of the chief of Zangon-Kataf, was accused of treating the Kataf as slaves and supporting the Hausa in the "perpetual subjugation of the owners of the land." The Kataf blamed the crisis on the emir for denying them the right to appoint their own chief, a right their neighbors were given.⁸² The emir, the Kataf alleged, usually resolved chieftaincy and land disputes in favor of the Hausa.

The Hausa saw the Kataf as uncivilized, constantly complaining "pagans."⁸³ They believed that the facts of history and conquest gave them both control of the land, saying the Hausa could not be called outsiders, since their ancestors had been living there for hundreds of years. The Hausa viewed the Kataf as hostile, accusing them of bow-and-arrow attacks on innocent Hausa farmers. The chairman of the local government, a Kataf Christian, was accused in 1992 of helping his people to attack the Hausa, the emir, and Islam.

An understanding of these accusations and counteraccusations must reach much further back than the 1990s. The Kataf regarded the

Islamic emirate, established in the nineteenth century, as an enemy, along with the pro-emirate colonial and postindependence governments. They themselves feel marginalized by the Hausa. The Hausa and Kataf had intermingled for centuries, beginning in precolonial times, when Zangon-Kataf lay along a regional trade route. It became a thriving colony for Hausa long-distance traders, and over time became a permanent Hausa settlement. The Hausa acquired land, originally as gifts from the Kataf. A population of Hausa traders and cultivators emerged, headed by the *sarkin Hausawa*.

Kataf nationalism developed over the course of the nineteenth century as a result of attempts by Fulani jihadists to extend their control over non-Hausa and non-Fulani people in southern Zaria and many other parts of central Nigeria. The Kataf, like many other groups in central Nigeria,

resisted the jihad. When the British conquered northern Nigeria and imposed a system of indirect rule, the power of the emir of Zaria was further strengthened over such people as the Kataf and others in the Zaria province. The Kataf said that the British had forcefully subjugated them and handed them to the emir and the Hausa-Fulani.

84 For those in southern Zaria, who were associated with the Plateau province, problems were fewer because they were able to retain their chiefdoms and enjoy some degree of autonomy. This was not so for the Kataf, who were lumped together with the rest of Zaria province and subjected to the overlordship of the emir, who appointed village heads to govern them.

Missionary activities spread rapidly during the colonial period. The Kataf, having rejected Islam, took to Christianity en masse. Two religions thus became well-established in the areas: Islam among the Hausa, and Christianity among the Kataf. Religion combined with ethnicity to polarize the town. After World War II, an assertive Kataf elite began to question the subjugation of their own chief to the Muslim emir when the Hausa chief was more powerful and had direct access to the emir.

Some reforms were made during the Gowon regime in the late sixties and early seventies, and certain groups in central Nigeria were allowed to appoint their own people as village and district heads, so long as the appointments were ratified by the emir. In the Kataf view, the emir approved only the appointment of puppets. Although a village or district head could be Kataf and a Christian, Kataf nationalists thought that they were "mere slaves and puppets" to the emir.⁸⁵ A village or district head had to obey the emir and carry out his instructions, or risk removal of his title and his income. Resistance to the emir was tantamount to resistance against the Hausa and all

Islam. The Kataf accused the emir of using his state-government connections to maintain control over the Kataf. The Hausa in Zangon-Kataf reported not to the Kataf district head, but directly to the emir. All decisions on the town, the Kataf believed, went in favor of the Hausa,⁸⁶ and the particularly contentious decisions were those of land rights. The Kataf believed that although they were entitled to all the land in Zangon-Kataf, they had been dispossessed of a large part of their territories by an emir who turned it over to the Hausa. In 1922, a two-kilometer stretch of land was acquired by the district head on behalf of the emir with no compensation to the landowners. For years, land acquisition became a means of support for the district head: all adult Kataf were required to contribute to its cultivation, but all proceeds went directly to the district head personally. In 1966, following administrative reforms, the emir decided to turn this land over to the Hausa community. The Kataf resisted the transfer without success.

For the Hausa and the emir, Kataf nationalism was misplaced and engineered by foreign missionaries bent on destroying northern culture. After 1966, as minority officers began to predominate in the army General Gowon himself was from southern Zaria, and others included Yohanna Madaki, a colonel and former governor of Gongola State, and Zamani Lekwot, a one-time General Officer Commanding, an ambassador, and a very senior officer the Hausa began to accuse both the Kataf military officers and the educated elite of being delusional miscreants. As far as the Hausa in Zangon-Kataf were concerned, the Kataf would only be satisfied with the voluntary or forced removal of the Hausa from the town.

87 The Kataf were described variously as anti-Islam, anti-Hausa, anti-northern, and anti-emir. "What, then, do they stand for?" asked an Hausa imam. His answer, "destruction of innocent Hausa traders, farmers, families, and religion,"⁸⁸ was an expression of a common belief among the Hausa.

In the 1990s, fresh struggles emerged over control of the new local government and market and over questions about allegiance to the emir of Zaria. The Kataf felt that they, and not the emir, should appoint the head of their local government. Kataf nationalists said there would be no peace until the power of the emirate was completely removed from their town and the Kataf were given charge over their own community. Yohanna Madaki explained that Kataf dignity was the cause of all the feuds:

The people are resisting the emirate incursion into their dignity and culture. The resistance is not anti-government, but a protest of cultural invasion by the emirate. Can you imagine Christians and even those who are village heads are being forced to attend islamic functions in Zaria. If any village head fails to do so, he would be penalised. Another puppet village head will be appointed. The solution is giving the people their

independence to manage their affairs. If that is not done, Kaduna will continue to be boiling point.⁸⁹

The Kataf complained that the Hausa traders treated them as slaves in the market that was built on land transferred to them in 1966.⁹⁰ Every issue in Zangon-Kataf became identity-based. When the new local government, headed by a Kataf, decided to relocate the main market to a neutral territory in 1991, the Hausa opposed the relocation and appealed to the emir, claiming that the relocation was meant to rob them of their economic power. The Kataf said that by moving the market to a neutral place would they be able to sell *burukutu*, a local alcoholic beverage, and pork, both of which the Hausa kept out of the old market because of Islamic precepts. The Kataf found no sympathetic ear for their appeals. When the

local government authorized the relocation on 6 February 1992, a bloody confrontation broke out, foreshadowing the May riots. About sixty people were killed in February, property worth two million naira was damaged, farms were destroyed, and many residential houses were burned. After the police had managed to stop the violence, the state government set up the usual judicial commission of inquiry to resolve the communal tension.

The Kataf were suspicious of this commission from the onset. The seven-man commission included four Muslims, and even though the chairman was Christian, they felt it was unfairly biased. The commission met in Kaduna, which the Kataf said prevented their elders from testifying, since they were too frail or too poor to make the journey.

91 They also believed that the emir was determined to conduct a separate one-man investigation of his own, which would no doubt decide in favor of the Hausa.

The crisis of 14 May broke out at a time of especially deep mistrust among these two communities. A pro-Kataf source said that a number of disgruntled Hausa farmers and school children had invaded Kataf farms, where they uprooted yam seedlings and cassava plants. A Kataf party seeking to find out what had happened was met only with insults. The Kataf retaliated by destroying Hausa farms. The Hausa fought back with brutal force, killing the majority of the Kataf.⁹² But a Hausa source told the story in reverse, saying that the Kataf were the first to destroy their farms, and that the Kataf youth launched a surprise attack on them while they were worshipping in the mosque.⁹³ It is clear only that there was a small altercation, brought about by deliberate provocation. Both groups mobilized, fetching bows, arrows, axes, guns, machetes, daggers, and shields.

By noon on 15 May, the clashes had consumed eighty-five lives and incapacitated the local police, and the violence continued unabated for another day. By 16 May, the town had been completely destroyed and hundreds of its residents killed. For three days, the police and the government had done nothing, allowing the people to destroy themselves. By the time three truckloads of mobile police arrived on the afternoon of 16 May, the war had burned itself out. Over four hundred corpses littered the streets, and most of the houses were burned to the ground.⁹⁴ Many of the dead had been killed by massive dagger and machete wounds; some were shot through with poisoned arrows and bows. In a few cases, people had been shot with guns, and others had been burned in their cars or homes. All the major churches and mosques were destroyed.

Many were injured, many had fled, and many more were to die later in hospitals or at home from their injuries. Bodies filled the Kafanchan General Hospital and the St. Louis Hospital in Zonkwa, while those who

could afford it went to private clinics in Zaria and Kaduna. As the dead and injured were moved, news of the crisis began to spread, spurring many in surrounding areas to seek vengeance. Since the Hausa are in the majority outside of Zangon-Kataf, the Hausa version of the story found a much larger audience. In Kaduna and Zaria, preachers called for a jihad.

95 Corpses of some Hausa victims of the Zangon-Kataf crisis were publicly displayed, rousing tensions further. As in previous cases, the popular response was immediate, as crowds flooded the cities.

By 17 May, news of the Zangon-Kataf crisis had spread far and wide. The state government failed to take adequate damage-control measures, believing that the crisis would be restricted to Zangon-Kataf. But the Hausa in Kaduna, believing that the Kataf had killed their people, launched a massive attack on Kaduna residents of southern Zarian origins. They attacked all the neighborhoods where these people were concentrated: Tundun Wada, Rigasa, Kabala West, Angwar Sanusi, Angwar Sanu, Angwar Rimi, Kakuri, Naraji, Angwar Television, Sabon Tasha, Anwar Dansa, Badarwa, Badiko, Kawo, and Nasarawa.⁹⁶

A pogrom similar to the attack on the Igbo in 1966 resulted. Because the people of southern Zaria were mostly Christians, they made an easy target when they went to church on Sunday 17 May. Many had gone to worship with no expectations of an ambush. The ECWA Church on Aminu Road was a particular venue of disaster. Many worshippers were killed there, including the church's minister, the Rev. Tachio Duniyio. Following the killing, both the vicarage and the church were set ablaze.⁹⁷ The Heken Church in Bardawa suffered a similar fate: the Rev. John Wesley and five others were killed. The Baptist Church at Angwar also lost its minister. Other churches were

abandoned, but the Hausa had set up roadblocks to entrap fleeing worshippers. Many abandoned their cars and ran to private homes to beg for sanctuary.⁹⁸ Among the congregations that suffered the most were the Evangelical Church of West Africa, the African Bethel Church, and the Rehma Church. As they had done in the 1987 crisis, the police merely stood by and observed the rioters.

Far too late, Governor Mohammed Dabo Lere went on the air at 7 p.m. on 17 May to inform the public of the riots in Zangon-Kataf and to assure them that the situation was under control. He appealed for peace and imposed a statewide dusk-to-dawn curfew.⁹⁹ But the curfew did not stop the rioters, who spent the night and early morning rallying Muslims to action over loudspeakers.¹⁰⁰ With no police enforcement of the curfew, the rioters were able to move around and to destroy the city. The violence continued on Monday, as the police were more interested in protecting

their own buildings than in quelling the rioters. The few arrests that were made only inflamed the Muslim rioters. In the afternoon, an attempt was made to attack the Sanusi police station to free those who had been detained and to assault the hundreds of Christians who had taken refuge there. But for the timely arrival of the army, the attack on the station would have been disastrous. The army dispersed the rioters and took refugees to a military barracks.

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The police, panicking and defending themselves, killed indiscriminately. One police sergeant reported that he and his colleagues were besieged by a crowd of hundreds chanting Islamic slogans. The police opened fire to disperse the crowd, killing forty before they themselves ran for protection.¹⁰² The police lost six men of their own, including two inspectors. One was viciously beaten.

But the Kaduna battle was not one-sided. The Christians and southerners fought back in self-defense. The Yoruba and Igbo held solidarity meetings, strategized, and took up arms. They attacked and destroyed mosques, even damaging the national headquarters of JNl.

Southerners and Christians fled the city and thousands sought refuge at police stations and army barracks. When the time came to count the dead and injured, it was discovered that it was not just people of southern Zaria who had been attacked, but also southerners and central Nigerians in general Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, and Nupe, among others, were victims of the attacks.

Attacks on the southerners can be explained in two ways. First, many Muslims thought that the southerners and Christians sympathized more with the Kataf than with the Hausa. Second, some informants said that it owed to the problem of identification. Rioters asked people

to identify their religion and ethnicity by reciting verses of the Qur'an or by speaking Hausa with an identifiable accent. Those who failed the test were identified as foreigners and attacked.¹⁰³ Over a thousand people lost their lives in this way. As in the Bauchi case, the way in which the killings were conducted reflected the extreme levels of anger and hatred. One pastor and his family were roasted alive in Tundun Wada as cheering crowds looked on.¹⁰⁴

In Zaria, the Zangon-Kataf crisis provided al-Zakzaky with the chance to avenge his 1991 defeat in Katsina. His men attacked the Zaria prison, where they released their members who were either being detained or serving prison terms. They killed two prison officials and wounded many others. Christians were also attacked; about a hundred who had sought refuge in the prison were killed. When the emir left his palace to appeal for calm, his car was damaged by rioters warning him to stay out of the fight.¹⁰⁵ Bulus Katung, the CAN secretary in Zaria, and three others lost their lives.¹⁰⁶

In some other small villages and towns in southern Zaria such as Zonkwa and Kagoro, the Hausa and indigenous populations attacked one another. In many other parts of the north like Kano and Abuja, non-natives stayed indoors to avoid any possible attack, while Muslims organized solidarity rallies in various locations.

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By Monday evening, when it was decided that the situation warranted army intervention, it was already too late. The situation had become so bad that every major hospital morgue in Kafanchan and Kaduna was filled. Corpses were displayed openly so that people could identify their relatives. In the last week of May, the Kaduna North Local Government Council organized a mass burial for 195 decaying corpses who had not been identified.¹⁰⁸ A number of people remain unaccounted for to this day. Hundreds of motorcycles and cars were destroyed. About twelve churches were burned and five mosques reduced to rubble. It took many weeks for life to return to normal in Kaduna and Zaria. All the schools, and commercial and government offices were unable to open. Non-natives locked their shops, motorists vacated the streets, families were dislocated, and refugees spent weeks in temporary shelters. Many non-natives, having survived the violence of 1987 and 1992, had to reconsider the need to remain in Kaduna and Zaria.

At the end of the violence came a resumption of the verbal warfare between ethnic and religious organizations. As was to be expected, CAN launched a severe campaign against Muslims and the Kaduna state government.¹⁰⁹ CAN blamed both the state and federal governments for failing to use the police and the army effectively. While recognizing that ethnicity was a factor in the conflict, CAN warned all Christians to be on the alert, to seek the means to protect

themselves, and not to rely on the government for protection.¹¹⁰

The Kataf elite, too, attacked the state and federal governments. Yohanna Madaki granted a series of interviews in which he attacked the emir of Zaria with vehemence, criticizing the government for ignoring people like him who could solve the problem and listening instead to the enemies of the Kataf people and to those who represented entrenched Hausa interests. The crisis as he saw it was both ethnic and religious in nature, which is why minorities and churches were targeted. Rather than arrest the Kataf, the government should engage in dialogue with the Kataf elite and community leaders to seek a lasting solution.¹¹¹

Postcrisis events followed a familiar pattern. Chiefs and leaders appealed for calm, the army and police patrolled cities and towns for a few weeks and then withdrew, markets and offices reopened, people reassessed the situation and planned what they would do the next time to defend

themselves. On the part of the government, promises were made about protecting lives and property, promoting religious freedom, compensating victims, and setting up a tribunal to investigate the violence. All these things happened as usual, but there were some new features to the aftermath of the Zangon-Kataf crisis.

In the first place, many people, especially Christians, believed that the violence had escalated as far as it had because the state government was carelessly slow in calling in reinforcements. The Kataf elite blamed the government and the police for failing to prevent the large-scale killings of their people. Madaki railed against the facts that the government had done nothing for three days, had imposed a curfew that it did not enforce, and had failed to coordinate the activities of the police and the army.

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Second, while there were investigations aimed at arresting those who had instigated the riots, it was a largely one-sided show. The Hausa elite demanded the punishment of Kataf leaders. Senior Kataf in the army were accused of sponsoring the violence and killing Hausa themselves. Yohanna Madaki and Zamani Lekwot were arrested. By the first week of June, nearly three hundred people had been arrested, including such prominent Kataf leaders as Babon Ayok, the Zangon-Kataf local council head, and Bala Danke, the district head.

Third, the state government dissolved the Zangon-Kataf local government council and appointed Malam Haruna Zock as sole local administrator. Under a military regime, such a dissolution would have been par for the course. But Dabo Lere and the officers of the Zangon-Kataf local government were all elected politicians. The Kataf saw the government's action as yet another deliberate attempt to undermine their own authority over their affairs.

The arrest of Kataf leaders and the determination of top Hausa politicians and military officers to teach the Kataf a lesson has meant that the crisis will not go away for quite a long time. The powerful judicial commission of inquiry set up to investigate the matter quickly became embroiled in political quagmire. The effort to blame Zamani Lekwot for the crisis, and a death sentenced imposed on him by the tribunal, which was later commuted to a short prison term by Babangida, created too many diversions from the actual causes of the 1992 violence. All of the ingredients of crisis continue to fester in Zangon-Kataf and the rest of Kaduna state. By December 1995, Lekwot had received a state pardon and sixty-one Kataf were released from jail, but the Hausa who abandoned Zangon-Kataf had refused to return and the local economy has still not recovered from the destruction.¹¹³

Religion and the Politics of the Third Republic

Religious violence has added to, and in some cases revived, the North-South divide and the problems of ethnic minorities. Since the 1970s, political analysts in the military government had concluded that the establishment of national political parties would bring an end to the impact of ethnicity. The Babangida administration, influenced by this thinking, made an unprecedented decision to establish just two political parties for the country, the left-leaning Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the right-leaning National Republican Convention (NRC). There was to be no hierarchy within these parties, all members being equal. The parties failed to function as anticipated. Old politicians and rich people quickly transformed the parties into what was suitable for them, and manipulated ethnicity and religion to accomplish their aims. In no time, the NRC became associated with the north and Islam and the SDP with the south and Christianity. This division was even worse than all the party alliances of the previous years.

By 1990, the justified fear was being expressed that religious violence and the crisis between Muslims and Christians could affect the disengagement of the military from power and the transition to the Third Republic. As I discussed extensively in chapter 3 above, the debate over al-Shari'a created its own crisis. The 1989 Constitution for the Third Republic anticipated religious tension and made provisions to prevent it by guaranteeing "freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

114 Unlike the previous constitutions, the 1989 document went to the extent of allowing religious activities in schools and preventing any

religion to use the school system to dominate another. Paragraph 37 states in part:

No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own, or a religion not approved by his parent or guardian

No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination.

Established mission churches who had been responsible for founding most of the early schools believed that the 1989 Constitution targeted them

unfairly by preventing them from using their schools for missionary work. CAN was upset that the word secular was dropped from the constitution. The atmosphere of the early 1990s was polluted by angry words, hate literature, and the expectation of religious warfare.

The 1991 riots and the ensuing verbal controversy between Muslims and Christians were immediately interpreted as having implications on the transition program. Some religious leaders were in fact accused of deliberately using religious conflicts to abort the transition to civil rule.

115 A number of other events, generally interpreted as disturbing by the media, also occurred. In January, the governor of Kwara state, Colonel Alwali Kazir, canceled the appointments of the administrative secretaries of the two political parties, the SDP and the NRC, because they did not "reflect the religious character of the state."¹¹⁶ Kwara state has a majority Muslim population. The NRC, trying to build a constituency among the Muslims, appointed only Muslims as secretaries.

What happened in Kwara was not unique. In an atmosphere of deep mistrust, leaders of both religions were monitoring the activities of both parties and counting the numbers of all appointments with respect to their religious affiliations. Religion had been moved to the political front burner. Three weeks before the decision by governor Kazir, CAN had accused Babangida of deliberately changing his cabinet to increase the number of Muslims.¹¹⁷ Media attention turned to the divisive role of religion in politics; the conventional wisdom was that the country had become a hostage to religion and those who skillfully manipulated it.¹¹⁸

With religious groups and their leaders openly attacking one another,

the atmosphere was ripe for manipulation by the politicians and even the government itself. We may begin with the government, which was allegedly neutral. On the one hand, the Babangida administration was showing concern for the religious tension and the conflicts by preaching tolerance and mobilizing the army although always too late against violence. On the other hand, the regime was profiting from the violence in justifying its continued rule. Indeed, Babangida himself succeeded in spreading the view that he was the only leader capable of managing all the tensions and conflicts, including the religious ones. Yet these were the very conflicts that his administration promoted and cultivated. Babangida's was the first of several regimes to be challenged about its religious inclinations. The preceding regime of Buhari had two Muslims at the helm, but Christians did not consider this an issue. What upset the Christians the most under Babangida was Nigeria's membership in the OIC. When Christians criticized Muslims, Babangida benefited because this allowed him to appear loyal to the

Islamic constituency. Such criticisms also provided a much-needed diversion for a regime with such a terrible economic record.

Babangida enabled religion to become a platform to express political issues. For most of the 1980s, the only associations tolerated by his regime were religious groups, and the only leaders who were able to speak freely without risking incarceration were religious leaders. Consequently, a number of politicians were encouraged to work in alliance with religious organizations to express their views and mobilize a following for the future. By 1988, the leaders of CAN had resolved that Christians must be directly involved in politics. CAN's 1988 manifesto was widely reported in the 1990s:

You must have positive belief that you have power to join in the reconstruction of Nigeria.

You must exercise your right by getting registered to vote. Let no one and indeed nothing prevent you from being registered.

You must always go out to vote for the leaders of your choice.

You must be ready to defend the truth and be ready to die for the truth.

You must not allow your conscience to be killed through intimidation, threat, manipulation and violence, remember, truth is a strong weapon against evil.

You must be ready to expose all those that have illegitimate foreign accounts, houses in foreign land.

You must reject any politician that provide you money to vote for him into power.

You must not allow any tribal sentiment to direct your choice of leaders.

You must not allow religious intolerance to guide your choice of leaders.

You must learn to be informed of the goings in society. If you are ignorant of things, people can easily manipulate you.

Remember only greedy, corrupt, arrogant, incompetent, irresponsible exploiters use money to buy votes. Do not allow yourself to be bought. Only fools allow themselves to be manipulated.

Always remember, Nigeria is in danger because of the past corrupt leadership.

119

With religion having been effectively transformed into a political platform, many statements and positions associated with religious leaders and religious groups acquired significance and media attention. The growing influence of religion also affected what many politicians told their followers. Many northerners, for instance, suggested that the Third Republic would be used to further the cause of Islamization. Christian politicians, too, promised that Nigeria would always be secular, and that they would be heavily

represented in all governments. The usual talk of Fulani domination filled the air, and there were suggestions that southerners unite to end it.

120 The Babangida regime was unable to respond effectively, either because it was focused only on its gains or because it lacked the credibility to do so.

When politicians began to campaign for elections in the two-party structure, the role of religion became clearer. First, there were those who reckoned that both religious and regional polarizations would best serve their purposes. Thus, some attempts were made to revive the old northern-Islamic/southern-Christian divide. Within this polarization, they mobilized for support and further contributed to raising the tenor of religious tension. Second, there were those who resorted to the strategy of political bargaining, the old style of building alliances across regions and religions. Alliances of this nature tend to benefit from all places and religions.¹²¹ Third, many politicians stuck to the timeworn technique of hypocrisy, condemning religious intolerance in public while actively engaging in religious politicking. A few even went so far as to say that those who were too involved in religion should not be elected.¹²² In private and at the grassroots level, not only did they continue to identify with their respective religions, but many politicians also sought the support of religious leaders. Fourth, religion became a factor in distributing political and other forms of power. State governors tried to balance political appointments and even the award of contracts as a way of satisfying diverse constituencies.

The highest stake for everyone was, of course, the presidency. In 1992 a so-called Islamic North and a Christian South were set against each other that risked not only producing a winner, but also breaking the

country apart. Christian minorities sought alliances that would protect them from a perceived attempt by the majority Islamic population to destroy them. In the final analysis, it was not religion that aborted the Third Republic in 1993, but the excessive ambition for power by Babangida and his associates.

8

Islam Against Islam

Lest it be thought that all occurrences of religious violence in Nigeria set Muslims against Christians or religious groups against the state, attention must be called to the many instances of violence among the divided Muslim community itself.

1 Differences among members of the same religion are often expressed through violence: one faction will seize places of worship in order to prevent others from using them; power struggles over the appointments of leaders are divisive and can end in physical combat; consensus over theological matters is not always easy or possible; changes result in prolonged quarrels; and the state even sometimes sets one faction against another in order to promote general instability when it is politically expedient.

While Nigerian Muslims like to present a common front and argue that there are no sects in Islam, there are in fact profound differences and divisions among them. When these divisions result in violence or political tension, they become difficult to conceal. The prevalent assumption that Islam is culturally and theologically monolithic, held mainly by Christians, is dead wrong. There are many different kinds of factions, sects, movements, and Sufi brotherhoods known as *tariqa*, often characterized by sharp doctrinal differences. The *tariqa* struggle among themselves for converts and for political hegemony, and their rivalries contribute to the country's religious problems. There are also Muslims who do not belong to the *tariqa*, demonstrating their opposition to Sufism in combative and violent ways. The notorious *Izala*, for instance, emerged in the 1970s as an anti-Sufi movement.

This again led to many conflicts, as the *tariqa* became better organized for a counterattack. In 1978 alone, there were over twelve incidences

of violence in northern towns and cities. Throughout the 1980s, there were not less than seventy outbreaks reported at various times and places. The crisis continues today.

Because most of the clashes are localized, they are generally underreported in the press. None of the clashes that occurred in Minna and Jebba, for instance, were ever reported in the *New Nigerian*, the leading northern newspaper. Indeed, one could argue that the precise number of such clashes may never be known unless access to all confidential police reports in the country can be had. A perusal of those Katsina's secret reports alone revealed more than thirteen hitherto unreported cases in the late 1980s. The police know about them because they usually end up dispersing the groups and detaining a few people. But the involved factions like to publicize the incidents because they feel they are completely justified in using violence to advance their views and reform errant Muslims.

2 The Nigerian urban media does not have sufficient reportorial staff and is slow to respond to issues that do not involve powerful politicians, groups, and leaders. Various levels of government prefer to suppress such news so as to prevent its spread, to avoid lionizing any particular group, and to give the impression of government-supported law and order.

Perhaps the nature of such violence also lends itself to limited reporting, despite its damaging impact. Most such conflicts involve abusive and physical violence between two competing groups or leaders. They break out either in the course of public preachings or in reaction to new publications or audio cassettes. They usually involve profound disagreement over forms of worship, the interpretation of Qur'an, or Islamic law. Such problems frequently appear unresolvable because the opposing groups are unwilling to iron out their

differences. Even if an opportunity for such dialogue is created, doctrinal differences are so sharply focused that an agreement is unlikely. While some of these clashes are mentioned below, my purpose is not to go into the specifics of violent incidents, as I have done in the three preceding chapters, but to explain generally why violence occurs between Muslims.

The two most influential Sufi movements in the country are the Qadiriyya (known in the north as the *Sadulu*) and the Tijaniyya (known in the north as the *Kabulu*).³ Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam. Every Sufi order has a founder, a chain of authority, and a large number of followers who subscribe to the doctrines and obey their leaders. They believe in the coming of a Mahdi to reform the world.⁴ Sufis aspire to experience God through *dikhr*, a set of activities including supererogatory prayer after the five *salat*, recitations of devotional formulas, and special weekly prayers.

There are internal differences among the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhoods based on modes of worship, the role of literacy, and some doctrinal issues.

The Qadiriyya is much older in Nigeria, established probably during the fifteenth century.

5 It was associated with the Wangarawa, a Mali trading group that contributed to the original spread of Islam in northern Nigeria. The Qadiriyya order was deft in adapting to the local milieu. Usmanu dan Fodio was a Qadiriyya, and he contributed substantially to the Sufi literature during the nineteenth century. His jihad helped to consolidate and convert many more people to the order. Challenges to the spread of the order were minimal during the nineteenth century. The Qadiriyya has continued to spread throughout this century. The Qadiriyya believe in mysticism and the *khalwa*, a doctrine of asceticism and commitment to prayers, reading, and spiritual exercises. The members acknowledge an allegiance to a spiritual leader, the *muqaddam*, who acts as the local representative of the *khalifa*, the keeper of the tomb of Abd-al Qadir in Baghdad. Abd-al Qadir's name is invoked for blessings, and he is expected to intercede on behalf of his followers on the Day of Resurrection. The members must also accept Sufi ethics and recite the devotional formulae of the order (*lazim* and *wazifah*) during prayers and other set times.

The Tijaniyya brotherhood, which was founded in the eighteenth century by Sheikh Ahmad Tijani of Algeria, began to spread during the nineteenth century, thanks largely to the efforts of 'Umar Tal, celebrated founder of the Islamic state of Segu Tukolor, and *khalifa* of the order in western Sudan. During the colonial period, the Tijaniyya made substantial progress, even in the north, where it was able to steal members from the Qadiriyya. With the extension of Tijaniyya

influence to Kano in the 1930s, more conversions were made possible and linkages with power were also established. In 1937, the leader of the order in West Africa, Sheikh Ibrahim Niass of Senegal, met the emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero, in Mecca. Bayero renewed his faith in the order, and he was able to influence many others in Nigeria and even the neighboring country of Niger to join the Tijaniyya.⁶ Through the emir of Kano, Niass visited Nigeria on many occasions. In some places like the Niger-Benue confluence, the Tijaniyya brotherhood assumed an ascendancy over others.⁷ The most influential leader of the Tijaniyya during this century was Sheikh Niass, who was known to his followers as "Khalifa of the Order," "The Great Leader," or "The Reformer of the Age." He uplifted the status of the Tijaniyya in Africa with his charisma, scholarship, mysticism, and wisdom. The order under Niass made a successful claim to universalism.

Unlike some of the other Muslim groups we have seen, the Tijaniyya are not opposed to trade or material acquisition of wealth through legitimate means. They assist one another in their businesses

8 and do not insist that women should be kept in seclusion, thereby allowing those in farming communities to make use of their labor. Unlike the Qadiriyya, the Tijaniyya brotherhood does not prescribe rigorous intellectual qualifications. Rather, a member meets the brotherhood's obligations by attending the Friday *hailala* midday prayer and by reciting the *wazifa* and *lazimi* every day. The Tijaniyya promises salvation to its members as long as they perform all the taxing litanies. Even their non-Muslim parents can be saved through the devotion of their children. They believe in saints, charms, folk medicines, and imitating the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad.⁹ Members of the brotherhood receive *tarbiya*, that is, spiritual instruction, and intuitive and deep knowledge of God from the local *muqaddam* or sheikh. Successful Tijaniyya Sufis come to know the secret power of religion and the exalted names of God. Receiving *tarbiya* is one of the leading aspirations of Sufi, and the tradition strengthens the identification between a leader and his followers. To receive *tarbiya* is to reach the upper echelon of the hierarchy. Unlike the Qadiriyya, the Tijaniyya do not retreat into isolation or solitude.

There are two dimensions to the internal Islamic conflicts that involve the Sufi: clashes between the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya on the one hand, and fights between Sufis and other Muslims on the other. Open conflicts result from these divisions, many of which are confusing to the public. I shall begin with a treatment of the general issues that divide Muslims, then explain the causes of the tension among the *tariqa*, and close with a discussion of the anti-Sufi sentiments of some other Muslims.

Why Muslims Disagree

As happens in most religions, Muslims tend to disagree over a variety of theological issues that have their origins in the past or in the statements of a particularly influential leader. In modern Nigeria, there are various Islamic groups that trace their beliefs to different roots and sources, some to the North African Sunni, some to the Shiites in Iran, and even some to the factions that have splintered from both of these. As I have indicated above, there are Sufi brotherhoods, there are those opposed to the brotherhoods, and there are Muslims in a multitude of small charismatic groups like the Maitatsine, each with its own dogmas and practices.

To better elucidate the differences among Muslim groups, I shall take up six of the major issues in turn.

10

History.

Disputes started very early in the history of Islam, leading to such highly competitive and divergent groups as the Shiites, the Kharajites, the Sunni, and others. While they all believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, they differ on such issues as the role of the imam, *umma*, the importance of devotion, and legal matters. Many of these various influences and controversies were imported into Nigeria as part and parcel of Islam. Many have been retained or modified. Different offshoots have emerged to interpret Islam in creative and adaptive ways. They all refer to history, but how they read and interpret history, just as how they interpret the Qur'an and Hadith, do vary, creating and deepening divisions. The major literature and ideas generated in the past remain as important as ever. Those who are opposed to the modernization of Islam cite legal opinions from the past, dating even back to the time of Caliph Ali (656-661). In modern Nigeria, local and transnational alliances are forged to connect with different factions. Saudi Arabia favors the Sunni and opposes the *tariqa*; Iran supports Shiitesreligious confrontations between these two countries spill over to Nigeria.¹¹

Reforms.

Every generation of Muslims battles with reforms and perceived lapses, both in general society and within Islam itself. Hardly any precolonial regime escaped criticisms, and the British suffered the same fate. Since independence, demands for change have been consistent and insistent. There have always been emergent Islamic

scholars and leaders who criticize the toleration of non-Islamic practices, corruption within Islamic society, and perceived misinterpretations and misrepresentations of doctrines. I have already made reference to Usmanu dan Fodio in this regard, but there were many before him who made similar complaints.¹² The tradition of the critical Islamic scholar-leader is firmly established and remains so today. Using the rolls of Islam and what they see to be the aspirations of Muslims, these scholars and leaders are not lacking in the courage to attack fellow-Muslims and to demand reforms to the faith.

Mahdism and Millenarianism.

Certain groups within Islam maintain a belief in a Mahdi, or messiah, who will appear on earth to save mankind. Such millenarianism has been interpreted as an attempt by the Muslim community to grapple with current difficulties, assaults on the religion, or simply restlessness with contemporary problems.¹³ The Mahdi is known as "the guided one," and has a divine mission to prepare the world for the coming day of judgement. In one oft-cited passage of the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying that Muslims should expect God

to send a Mahdi at the beginning of every century in the form of a *mujaddid* (reformer) who will purify the religion. The signs of the imminent arrival of a *mujaddid* include dissent among Muslims, political troubles, moral degeneration, social decay, gross injustice and oppression of the poor. Mahdism has a long tradition in Africa as early as the fifteenth century, the concept of the Mahdi had reached West Africa, largely because of the respectable writings of al-Suyuti, the Egyptian supreme judge of the Islamic world from 1497 to 1505. Al-Suyuti's writings concerned the Mahdi and the end of the world. According to al-Suyuti, a Mahdi would emerge to destroy the *dajjal* (analogous to the Antichrist), cleanse the world, and bring lasting peace, prosperity, justice, and order. The Mahdi would be a Muslim, related to the Prophet Muhammad and chosen by God. He would purify Islam, in preparation for the end of the world. What the Mahdi would do was very clear, but when he would appear remained a mystery. Al-Suyuti predicted that the Mahdi would come after the reign of twelve righteous caliphs. By his time, there had been ten, and al-Suyuti calculated that a Mahdi should appear either by 1785-86 or 1789-90.

14 Mahdi gained widespread adherence in West Africa and remains important to the present time.¹⁵ It has served to inspire the jihadist leaders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of those who followed dan Fodio believed that he was the long-awaited Mahdi. For some time dan Fodio did not deny this, perhaps in the service of strengthening his own legitimacy. His son, Bello, was to say that the appearance of the Mahdi would bring about the completion of the jihad, suggesting that his father was a forerunner to such a Mahdi. So strong was the belief in the Mahdi that Bello sent spies to seek him out, and a number of Mahdist states emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1881, Muhammad Ahmed al-Mahdi of Sudan proclaimed himself the Mahdi and gained a following in northern

Nigeria, notably in the Adamawa and Gombe emirates. The Adamawa Mahdists troubled the Sokoto authority. In the early years of colonial rule, the British were so inundated with news of the Mahdi that they, too, began to search for him.¹⁶ In future years, the administration was to feel its stability was in constant jeopardy from religious propaganda associated with Mahdism and related ideas.¹⁷ It was that fear that influenced the British attitude to the spread of the Ahmadiyya movement¹⁸ in the country.¹⁹ Other self-proclaimed Mahdis appeared, Jibril Gaini of Gombe among them. The Gaini Mahdists fought the British. In the end they were unsuccessful, but Mahdism was by no means destroyed. Mahdist ideology flourished in Sudan, through which many Nigerian pilgrims passed. In the early decades of colonial rule, the Mahdists urged Muslims to reform and to prepare for the

end of colonial rule. Some of their leaders even called for a jihad, criticizing both the British and Islamic political leaders. Such criticisms continued throughout colonial rule. It was either expected that a Mahdi would come or at least that somebody would declare himself to be one. In 1904, the chief of the town of Satiru declared himself the Mahdi, but he was immediately arrested and put in prison, where he died. In future years, Mahdist literature and ideas continued to circulate. In the 1940s, Kano became the capital of Mahdism in the country, and it was from there that Mahdist literature was most widely distributed.

As ancient as the idea of Mahdism is, it remains relevant in modern Nigeria. There continues to be an expectation that a leader will come to set the country straight. There is no need to convince Nigerians that they live in a country in need of salvation even their leaders admit as much. The Savior, for a number of Muslims, will be a reformer. This strong belief has sustained a tradition of commitment to a leader who provides hope. It also generates problems when more than one Islamic leader claims to be the Mahdi, or when conflicting beliefs arise about what the whole idea stands for in contemporary Nigeria. As in the past, Mahdism is associated with militancy, especially as a restless poor population expresses its desire for change in religious terms.

Ethnicity.

In spite of efforts to create a transnational Islamic solidarity, there are still local colorations that make Muslims in one region different from others elsewhere. Many Hausa Muslims in Ibadan and Ile-Ife will not worship in the same mosques as Yoruba Muslims, who are less critical of traditional religion and more accommodating of Western ideas and influences.

20 Their attitudes tend to be less radical with respect to the need for

Western secular education. So far, Yoruba Muslims have not taken up arms against Yoruba Christians or against one another, although controversies and enmity have been generated. The defense of traditional religion and culture is justified more by Yoruba Muslims than their northern counter-parts. "Imale ko wipe ka ma soro ile wa" (Islam does not forbid us from fulfilling the obligations to local cults) is a common slogan heard among Yoruba Muslims wishing to reconcile Islam with their traditional faiths. For many northern Muslims, such a reconciliation is sacrilegious; they regard all things associated with cultural revival and traditional religion as paganist, and therefore unholy and unacceptable.

Western Influences.

Different Muslims perceive the challenge of Western civilization differently. There are advocates of complete rejection, like Marwa or Umaru Nassarawa. In the 1970s and 1980s, this latter led a small group of followers and preached in several parts of the north that all Muslims who

sent their children to secular schools and worked for salaries were infidels. So disturbing was his anti-Western attitude, even to the Sokoto authorities, that he was barred from preaching in the town. He went to neighboring villages to spread his gospel.

21 There are others who seek understanding and accommodation with Western culture. To those who reject Western trends, Euro-American influences are regarded as corrupt and threatening to Islam. Pro-Western Muslims are thought to be stricken with an illness whose only remedy is the Qur'an. Those in the anti-Western movement believe that Nigeria should seek its strength not in Westernization, but in increasing commitment to Islam. Fundamentalists are preoccupied with attacks on Western materialism and technology that they feel threaten Islam. The Qur'an is not open to challenge or to the so-called rational discourse that would question its authority. All Muslims, irrespective of their education, must accept the Qur'an and all the contents of Muhammad's prophetic message. An ideal society must emerge, based not on Western or secularist thoughts, but on the submission of Nigerians to the commandments of God. This submission will bring true happiness for as long as Islamic laws are obeyed. In essence, Islam becomes the key to progress and the quintessential science of order and happiness. For the fundamentalists, politics cannot be separated from religion because the political leader must be a Muslim, someone devout enough to legislate for the country.

Not all Muslims are opposed to Western influence. Pro-Westerners argue that Islam can cope with aspects of Western civilization, and that it can avoid exploitation and the dangers of imperialism by making the religion more adaptable to modern day requirements and creating a high level of efficiency in state management. The definition

of "efficiency" varies from one person to another, but its senses include good governance and radical changes in Nigeria. There is, by and large, an increasing accommodationist attitude to secular education because, from the pro-Western point of view, it provides better opportunities for participation in secular activities and mobility. Muslims who advocate secular education, however, pressure the state to incorporate Islamic religious education into curricula. Furthermore, many Qur'anic schools are themselves Westernized to a small degree, teaching English and other subjects relevant to living in the modern world.²² The most far-reaching development is the combination of Islamic and secular education, a development facilitated by the rapid growth of departments of Arabic and Islamic studies in colleges and universities. It is coming to be the case that highly educated Muslims need proficiency both in Islam and in a secular discipline.

Economics.

Although religion unites people of widely diverse back-

grounds, Muslims are deeply divided by the gap between rich and poor. Not all Muslims have access to the presidential mosque in Abuja or to the private mosques in the houses of the wealthy. The division affects interpretations of the role of Islam in the state. To the rich, Islam provides an opportunity to build connections and to network. Indeed, there are rich Muslims who try to maintain a separate identity through membership in elite organizations like the Lions Club and the Rotarians. To the politically ambitious, Islam builds legitimacy. To the poor, Islam gives a voice for anger and demands for change. Social discontent among the poor contributes to their identification with reformers, radicals, and Mahdists.

Why the Sufis Clash

For the remainder of this chapter, I wish to focus on the crises generated by the Sufis not just to provide an elaborate case study, but also to point out the most common cause of crises within the Muslim community. Until the 1970s, the competition between the two Sufi brotherhoods was intense.

²³ For reasons stated below, they have become united in recent times and now represent a conservative alternative force to the more militant Muslims. The Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya are rivals for converts and for the propagation of their ideas. Given the intensity of proselytizing through the 1960s, they seemed like two armies preparing for battle. Both orders have a history of successful jihads, and their leaders have always been politically influential and ambitious. The trouble lies at the local level, where over-zealous preachers market their order in aggressive ways. Leaders embark upon itinerant journeys, conduct public preachings, organize religious ceremonies, and lead in social ceremonies. All of these are opportunities to get at rivals. While most incidents are verbal assaults, even they split communities into factions. In the 1950s and 1960s, attempts to win converts generated a

number of clashes. But the best-known of the tensions have been associated with the cunning efforts of political parties to pit one order against the other to win votes. The NPC, the NEPU, and even the AG have tried to obtain the support of Sufi leadership in this way.

Personality differences among the leaders of the *tariqa* promote conflicts. Sufi leaders are very influential among their followers, since they constitute an important link between the members and Allah. When two leaders disagree, their members tend to join in the dispute. Many such clashes have occurred in different parts of the country at various times.

Conflicts among the *tariqa* center around orthodoxy, the definition

of who a true Muslim is. The notorious 1978 fight in Illela broke out because a Tijaniyya preacher, Ali Furfuri, referred to the Qadiriyya as infidels.

24 In August 1978, a charismatic preacher, Sani Yahaya, went around the Pass area of Plateau state attacking the Tijaniyya as anti-Muslims who were no better than Christians.²⁵ In the same year, four preachers in the Bichia area of Kano state were arrested by the police for attacking the Qadiriyya as "pagans."²⁶ Two Tijaniyya preachers were warned by the Zuru police in Sokoto state for provoking the Qadiriyya by calling them infidels. Many of these conflicts relate to problems of accommodating change in the modern world, problems like the role of technology and secular education and the extent to which women's power and status should be limited.

There are major surface differences between the two Sufi orders. Posture during prayer is one such difference. The Tijaniyya believe that they must pray with their arms folded across their chests, a practice known as *qabl*. The Qadiriyya and most other Muslims, on the other hand, place their arms at their sides, a practice known as *sadl*. While arm position might seem like a minor issue to non-Muslims, it is symbolic of deeper doctrinal or ideological divisions. Indeed, the local names of the two Sufi orders derive from this posture: *kabalu* from the *qabl* posture, and *sadalu* from *sadl*. There are cases of splits within congregations over the issue.²⁷ Worse still, the practice of an imam is an indication of the faction that is more powerful within a town.

Whether or not a true Muslim should smoke is not decided in either the Qur'an or the Hadith, as against the case of drinking alcohol, which is explicitly prohibited. Whereas many Muslims believe that smokers can receive salvation, the Tijaniyya prohibit the practice.

Some criticize the order for superseding divine laws with man-made.²⁸ The Tijaniyya say that smokers are more likely to pursue other vices, like drinking alcohol, tolerating prostitution, and encouraging others to smoke.²⁹

The Tijaniyya recite some of their litanies in groups, producing loud noises their rivals criticize as annoying and political. They are required to chant *dikhr* over and over, collectively and loudly. For the Tijaniyya, these litanies define their identity and make them better Muslims, because they go over and above the five pillars of Islam. The Qadiriyya, on the other hand, believe that the recitations are made only to attract public attention, and say the resulting noise constitutes a nuisance.

Still another issue is the place of celebration and festivals in Islam. The Tijaniyya believe in marking *maulud al-Nabi*, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, with fanfare. During his lifetime, Niass turned the occasion into an annual pilgrimage to Kaolack, his base in Senegal. This

was the most important night in the religious calendar, when he would offer a *wa'z*, a special sermon on the life of the Prophet, the cosmology of the Order, and current issues.

³⁰ The event is still duplicated by local leaders throughout Nigeria. There are disputes whether the purpose of this pilgrimage is to mark the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad or to worship the leader of the order.³¹ To some other Muslims, who use the day to dance around the town singing and drumming, the Tijaniyya would reply that they are besmirching the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad with the same kind of commercialization and festivities involved in Christ's birthday in December.³² In recent times, the celebration of *maulud al-Nabi* has become more elaborate, with school children dancing round the town in uniforms, and a host of activities relating to Qur'anic education. Many of these changes owe not to Sufism, as the critics claim, but to attempts to imitate the celebrations of Christians. By the same process, Muslims have created their own equivalents of the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, and the Boys Brigade. The question is how to respond to these innovations while remaining good Muslims.³³ Even a productive local experiment in cross-religious fertilization produces its own conflicts.

The Anti-Sufi Campaign

Anti-Sufi Muslims accuse the *tariqa* of hero worship. They condemn the excessive adulation of such leaders as Niass, and call his followers a cult of personality. "Who appointed that Niass as the Reformer?" asked Imam Saibu of Katsina.³⁴ The Sufis also have local and regional leaders who are very well respected. Critics of the Sufi view the fact that the brotherhoods confer on their leaders the power to give followers spiritual depth as a means to manipulate followers and to prevent more direct access to Allah. "They are fake intermediaries"

who profit from the poor and offer "misleading lessons," asserted a former member of the Tijaniyya.³⁵ Tijaniyya Sufis who receive *tarbiya* after a long period of interaction with a leader will not discuss their experience even with their families and friends.

The Sufi are accused of not treating Islam with the appropriate gravity, and they have been called apostates, "pagans", and infidels.³⁶ "They are like Christians," one critic said, "who go to Church once a week, very casually, and well dressed."³⁷ Just as Usmanu dan Fodio, himself a Qadiriyya, had criticized the Hausa kings for their lapses during the nineteenth century, so do the anti-Sufi Muslims criticize the Sufi for theirs during this century.

The basis for the criticism of these *tariqa* lies no doubt in orthodoxy: Muslims differ over what makes a true Muslim and what practices are regarded as legitimate. Sufi rules of worship are described as rather lax.

38 Some of their liturgical practices are described as un-Islamic; the Tijaniyya Sufis, for instance, recite the *wazifa*, which according to their critics is not even in the Qur'an.³⁹ The promise of salvation to members of the Order and their parents is regarded as absurd and overgenerous, more so as "pagans" are covered in this rather broad assurance. The Tijaniyya expects its members to recite the *lazimi*, a request for forgiveness of sin that critics say has no basis in Islam, almost two hundred and fifty times a day.

The Sufi are associated with the recitations of *dikhr*, praises to Allah, after worship in mosque. The Tijaniyya do this on Friday, after the midday prayer, accompanied with singing and chanting through the streets in demonstration of devotion to Allah. This practice has extended to other functions, and musical groups, have developed traditions in Arabic and local languages. The song texts include affirmations of faith, praises to successful Muslim leaders, and even attacks on opponents. A few well-established groups have released audio cassettes.⁴⁰ Many anti-Sufi Muslims feel that this sort of innovation is not sanctioned by the Qur'an, and is not something the Prophet Muhammad would have done. They feel that *dikhr* is an exhibitionist and unnecessary public display of faith.⁴¹

Sufi beliefs in mysticism and saints are condemned as un-Islamic. Sheikh Niass is accused of arrogance for having described himself as the "seal of the saints," a title that conferred on him the power to understand God; his claimed ability to guarantee salvation to dedicated followers is further evidence of his arrogance. The

Tijaniyya is a centralized order with a capital at Kaolack and a hierarchy of national and local leaderships; enemies of the Tijaniyya criticize this as a structure like that of a political party, which encourages intense competition for power.

The Sufi are accused of ignoring the education of women. The Tijaniyya do not force their women into seclusion, which is seen by critics as a promotion of women's illiteracy, which denies women the opportunity to strengthen their faith and the ability to impart Islamic knowledge to their children.⁴²

There are additional economic and political dimensions to the criticisms of the *tariqa*. Leading members of Sufi orders are associated with entrenched political and economic interests, as emirs, political leaders, marabouts, and major traders. The Tijaniyya do not discourage their members from seeking wealth. In some places, they control the cattle and kolanut trade, making use of the brotherhood to build a network of commer-

cial relationships. Members of the order can gain materially if they know how to manipulate fellow Muslims to their advantage. For the Tijaniyya, religion and salvation do not preclude accumulation. As long as they fulfill the litany requirements, since they are not expected to disengage from the world, they can use their time to pursue economic and political interests. It would appear as if the Tijaniyya doctrines actually set out to promote materialism, because salvation can be acquired while still pursuing worldly things. Many rich and well connected Muslims belong to the Tijaniyya order.

Wealthy Sufis, in turn, use their wealth to further the interests of Islam. They are among the sponsors of such bodies as JNI and the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, as well as student organizations like the Muslim Students Society. They build mosques, subsidize the pilgrimages of their relations and friends, and donate money to imams and Islamic preachers to sustain themselves and to run local Qur'anic schools.

Religious leaders at all hierarchical levels of the two orders make money through consultations and donations. Local Tijaniyya *muqaddamat* can live off collections taken at a mosque. When a sheikh, a more senior leader, visits a town, he is hosted by the entire community and receives a gift upon his departure. Leadership comes with power and privilege over a wide region.

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These are the reasons that the Sufi attract resentment, especially among the poor or those aspiring to join the ranks of the elite. Perhaps this resentment has fueled the anti-Sufi *Izala* movement that I shall discuss below. The poor and the middle class are attracted to the anti-Sufi message that true Muslims must avoid heavy expenses such as those involved in marriage, naming, and funeral ceremonies. The

religious leaders, the so-called intermediaries, need not be paid large emoluments for their duties, and the cost of entertaining visitors can be reduced.

The claim that the anti-Sufi movement is economically based, while valid to a limited extent, has two strikes against it. First of all, anti-Sufism is not of recent origin. It began during the colonial period in response to colonial changes and the lapses associated with the emirs and many Sufi leaders.⁴⁴ Anti-Sufi leaders like Gumi developed their ideas decades before the 1970s.⁴⁵ The second point is that the anti-Sufi Muslims, including the highly organized *Izala*, are not opposed to wealth, business, or even a "life style of comfort."⁴⁶ Islam has never been hostile to commerce, although those who control trade can become victims of avarice. Members of the *Izala* include traders, transporters, and even leading hotel money-changers.⁴⁷ Other anti-Sufi critics are not opposed to business or to the accumulation of money needed for the hajj and for sponsoring the Islamic cause. Trade has always been exploited to serve the expansion of Islam.

If such economic aspirations are common among Muslims, why then do the *Izala* and other Muslims oppose the Sufi? First, many accuse imams and preachers of partiality to the wealthy because they accept money from them.

48 Islamic religious leaders are accused of conspiracy and are implicated in some of the country's problems. Such implications erode both their religious and moral authority, causing Muslims to seek out, in the words of one young man, "new men with correct values."⁴⁹

Secondly, the issues of Islam and wealth are relevant to the construction of an identity based on the rejection of Sufi principles. As critics of the Sufi make clear, Islam needs to be reformed in such a way as to differentiate it from the beliefs of the Sufi. Reforms can also be made in the means of acquiring and spending money. It should be acquired in legitimate ways, the critics say, and not through corrupt activities like theft, abuse of political offices, or illegal business practices. This is no doubt a devastating comment on those wealthy Nigerians who have money, but no documentation on how they come about it. As to spending, it is said, Muslims should not be extravagant. The way they project their social interests must be sensitive to Islam: no alcohol, no drugs, no prostitution, no gambling, and no ostentatious living.

Anti-Sufism itself is therefore a marker of identity, and the formation of the *Izala* proves this beyond any reasonable doubt. As the *Izala* transforms itself into a mass organization and spreads to other parts of West Africa, it projects itself as an alternative Islamic identity, just as a Christian charismatic movement would distinguish itself from the Aladura or the established mission churches.⁵⁰

The undisputed leader of anti-Sufism in Nigeria was the late

Abubakar Gumi. The Qadiriyya was already well established in the Sokoto province, where Gumi grew up, and he was initiated into it like many of his contemporaries. Gumi did not provide details on his transition from Sufism to his latter-day anti-Sufi stance. Perhaps this conversion came out of his hostility to British rule, the excesses of the emirs and others in the Qadiriyya elite, and the need to reform Islam. He was opposed to Sufism because he thought that it was incapable of building an ideal Islamic state, since it requests its members to withdraw from society. His anti-Sufism was manifested in different ways at different times. He had a fight at Maru with the local imam and the district head, criticizing them for not knowing the differences between the various Islamic schools (the Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, Hanafi, Qadirriyya, and Tijaniyya). In 1953, while in transit at Tripoli, he described a Sufi worship "with drums and ecstasy which I could not quite associate with the dignity and poise usually desired of someone saying his prayer."⁵¹

Gumi traces the origin of Sufism to the attempts to combine Oriental theosophy with Islamic practices.

For Gumi, neither of the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya brotherhoods follow the dictates of Islam. He proffers three charges against them:

My first disagreement concerns the overall objectives of Sufism, which involve withdrawal from worldly affairs, so that one does not have to teach others, for instance, or participate in social matters. Secondly, I find Sufi teachings contradictory to Islam, especially as regards the powers attributed to the leaders, the canonisation of individuals as saints, the elaborate initiation rites and the observance of special prayers and chants determined for the individual follower by his authorised Sheikh. There is no mysticism in Islam. Everything has been laid out clearly and the individual Muslim never stands in need of anyone else's intercession between him and God, no matter how learned or devoted.

Thirdly, I consider the organizational structures of the brotherhoods very deceptive and exploitative. In every brotherhood, there is an extensive hierarchy linking the ordinary follower (Murid), at the bottom to the leading Sheikh at the top, through a network of other subordinate Sheikhs. During initiation the Murid would pronounce an oath of allegiance formally binding him to all the senior members of the brotherhood, because they are considered to have powers to save him from all difficulties. Many a Murid had been deceived into surrendering all he had to his Sheikhs, often at great cost to himself and his dependants.

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He spent a great deal of time appealing to people to abandon the Sufi orders and their practices. In the 1960s he tried hard to use his connection with the northern political elite to draw them away from Sufism. He campaigned against them in his radio sermons and on the pages of newspapers, and in 1972, he published an aggressive book attacking Sufism.⁵³

Gumi complained about other problems as well. Muslims must perform ritual ablution, except when access to water was difficult; they must not keep concubines or slaves; they must not bow or prostrate to anyone, or even pay homage, for only Allah deserves such treatment. He criticized those Muslims who believe that their ancestors have power over them, who offer sacrifices to natural objects, and who believe in spirits. He accused Sufi leaders of deceiving Muslims and contributing to many of these illegitimate practices. "Owing to the ignorance of the society," Gumi asserted,

many forms of Sufi belief and practice had come to be accepted as though they were the correct order in the religion. The tariqa Sheikhs were treated with great reverence because of their claim to have certain divine attributes.

Often, it was claimed that they could see God and receive from Him or the Holy Prophet a special kind of prayer or instructions. Consequently, some were even consecrated as saints by their followers, and their names were invoked by the followers for assistance during dangerous circumstances.

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Gumi warned all Muslims not to believe in the idea of intercessors in Islam and rather to seek help directly from God. Gumi believed that members of the Sufi orders were against him. He thought that a Sufi leader had wanted him killed during the coup of 1966. From the mid-1970s until his death, Gumi was firmly on the bad side of the Sufi followers, and he seized upon every opportunity to attack them. The two brotherhoods dismissed Gumi as irreligious and unlearned, and they, too, tried hard to challenge his authority.⁵⁵

An organized and formidable Islamic society emerged in 1978 to attack Sufism. This was the *Jama'at Izalat al-Bid'a wa Iqamat al-Sunna* (The Movement for Suppressing Innovations and Restoring the Sunna), or *Izala* for short. It was founded with the blessing of Gumi, who read the inaugural address at its launching in March 1978 and provided much of its intellectual inspiration. Critics of the *Izala* insist that it was also Gumi who arranged for substantial financial support from Saudi Arabia and Libya.⁵⁶ The official leader and founder of the *Izala* was Isma'il Idris, a Fulani mallam born in Katagum around 1937. He was on the staff of JNI from 1969 to 1974 before joining the Nigerian army as an imam. Four years later he was discharged, apparently because of his extremist views. Within a few years, the *Izala* spread in the north, expanded to the south, and even infiltrated neighboring countries. The *Izala's* position on Islamic matters is basically a distillation of Gumi's philosophy. The movement is opposed to innovations, mysticism, animism, and any remnants of traditional religion in Islam.⁵⁷

The *Izala*, comprising a large number of young men and women, declares its opposition to Sufism outright. Indeed, Sufism is their main target, because it is believed to have prevented the practice of orthodox Islam. The *Izala* specifically rejects most Sufi doctrines. In addition, they criticize such Sufi practices as leadership hierarchies, ablutionary laxity, and the encouragement of prostration. As if seeking to repeat the nineteenth-century jihad, they condemn the power of the emirs and religious leaders. For the *Izala*, these leaders are exploiters of the poor, and they are infidels who promote the use of charms. "The Marabout and the Babalawo are the same,"⁵⁸ explained an Ilorin-based Yoruba convert to *Izala*. This is a carefully crafted analogy meant to criticize Muslims who believe in divination, occultism, and destiny.

If the *Izala* is unable to recreate dan Fodio's jihad in the context of modern Nigeria, its ideals are undoubtedly rebellious. For example, the

Izala's injunction against kneeling or prostration before elders, social superiors, and authorities violates the customary traditions of many Nigerians. For the Yoruba, this injunction carries religious ideals too far, because they have always indicated respect through prostration. Even in the context of Hausa customs, this and some other instructions constitute challenges to age-old practices. The *Izala* say they are not opposed to seniority or respect in principle, but that they believe such practices must be legitimated by Islam. More research is necessary to discover whether the appeal of the young to the *Izala* is driven by the opportunity to rebel or if it owes to actual doctrinal agreement.

The *Izala* also criticizes ostentatious living, corruption, and flagrant displays of wealth. Members must not give too much money to Islamic leaders or waste their savings on lavish ceremonies. As I pointed out above, they do not discourage the honest pursuit of wealth, spending for the advancement of the faith and the assistance of others. But all these must conform to the *sunna*, that is, to the body of religiously sanctioned activities. An understanding of the *Izala's* critique of Sufism and wealth has to be partly located in their attempt to use Islam to correct the lapses associated with what wealthy Nigerians do with their money. Muslims and non-Muslims alike detest the arrogance and waste associated with wealthy Nigerians. *Izala* seeks for its members to be careful with their spending, something that perhaps encourages accumulation. What is to be done with the end-products of such accumulation is unclear. Most members of *Izala* are not in a position to accumulate wealth, but the few who do are encouraged to promote the cause of Islam through *Izala*-sponsored activities.

The emerging ethos of individualism promoted by the anti-Sufi, anti-hierarchy, and anti-hero tenets of *Izala* tends to be moderated by the communal ethos that encourages support for others and for Islam.

Herein lies the very tension that may destroy *Izala* itself. Anti-Sufi economic-minded Muslims still have to make their money and conduct their businesses, not just within the parameters of Islam but also of modern Nigeria. The members of *Izala* have to work and to transact businesses with non-members, even with the Christians. In spite of its emerging transnational character, *Izala* officers remain northerners, interested in the control of Nigeria by a northern political elite. Members of *Izala*, for instance, joined in the campaign to prevent M. K. O. Abiola from becoming the country's president in 1993. In a previous election, the *Izala* itself was almost split when Gumi urged Muslims to vote for Shagari's NPN at a time when the NPN was already discredited; and won that election only through unprecedented electoral fraud.

The anti-Sufi opposition generated many open confrontations and clashes. Notable clashes between the *Izala* and the Sufi included an incident on 21 April 1978 in Bauchi, which is described at the end of this chapter. In August of the same year, the *Izala* fought to prevent the Tijaniyya from holding the Friday *jumat* congregational prayers at the small town of Kurgwi in the Shendam district of Plateau state. One preacher, Abass Abubakar, went around Benue state warning Muslims against listening to the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, saying their leaders were apostates. In Minna, a Kano preacher by the name of Idris Abdullahi made a public speech on 13 November 1978 attacking the *tariqa*, using uncompromising language and making assurances that all their members were destined for everlasting hell.

No *Izala* member or preacher is as famous as Isma'il Idris, an indefatigable preacher so fearless in his attacks on the *tariqa* that one might think he harbors personal grievances against many of its members. Were Idris born in a different age, he would have turned the *Izala* into a jihad against the Sufi brotherhoods. Through books, pamphlets, audio cassettes, and aggressive open air preachings, Idris voices the *Izala's* opposition to Sufism. He accuses Sufi leaders of appropriating the attributes of Allah by venerating their own tombs, asking their followers to pray and take oaths in their names, and turning themselves into saints.

59 True Muslims and all the members of the *Izala* are warned to keep their daughters away from the members of the Sufi orders. Idris is concerned that all citizens be properly educated of Sufism's dangers. He encouraged the *Izala* to establish Qur'anic schools for their children in order to avoid the influence of Sufism. Classes are also organized for women, who are taught the Qur'an, family responsibility, and an appropriate code of dress. The *Izala* believe in *purda*, the seclusion of women, and a less active political role for

women. Where it has been possible, separate *Izala* mosques have been built, to differentiate them from other worshippers.

Were the situation not troublesome enough between the Sufi and the *Izala*, a new group emerged to counterattack the *Izala*. This was the *Jundullahi*, which called for nothing less than complete destruction of the *Izala*. The *Jundullahi* was sponsored jointly by the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, who overlooked their differences in order to fight their common enemy.⁶⁰ For the leadership of the orders, the *Izala* comprises "disgruntled elements inspired by the fanatical ideas of Gumi"⁶¹ to destroy them, ridicule their faith, debase Islam, and erode traditional authority.⁶² The *Jundullahi* quickly presented itself as the representative of orthodox Islam, committed to practicing Islam as sanctioned by the Prophet.⁶³ It was as if the hands of the clock had turned full circle: the radical Sufi Islam of the nineteenth century

had been forced to acquire an image of conservatism to ensure its own survival in a highly competitive religious marketplace and an ever-changing Nigerian nation.

The late 1970s and 1980s were hostile to peace among Muslims, as the two organizations used every opportunity: sermons in mosques, air time on radio, preachings in private homes to fight. Many abusive cassettes were produced, and followers were prepared for battle. It was perhaps this polluted atmosphere that allowed Marwa, al-Zakzaky, and others to function, borrowing styles and strategies from Gumi, the *Izala*, and the *Jundullahi*. JNl, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the sultan, and the emirs lost control over these bodies as they engaged in dogfights with one another.

As far as the brotherhoods are concerned, the criticisms against them are unfounded. They regard themselves as true Muslims, they believe in all the five pillars of Islam, they are sure of salvation, and they have sufficient zeal and interest in their religion. They see themselves as promoting the cause of Islam in the country because they "unite all tribes and states."

64 It is true that they are transethnic and transnational in composition, because their members are scattered in many countries. They present their leaders as holy, devout, and learned. Niass was not just a reformer to the Tijaniyya; he was the holiest man of his day.

The clash first mentioned above between the *Izala* and the Sufi brotherhoods occurred in 1978 in Zaria; one person was killed and many others injured.⁶⁵ Later in April, the battle shifted to Mangun in the Pankshin district of Plateau state, when the *Izala* again clashed with the Tijaniyya. One person was badly injured and the police detained a number of people. The *Izala* attacked the police station to

free their detained men.⁶⁶ Two months later, there were violent clashes in Gombe, Bauchi state, between the *Izala* and the Tijaniyya. For almost a week, the two groups attacked one another with bows and arrows. Three Tijaniyya vehicles were damaged, one man was killed, and many were injured.⁶⁷ In some cases, the police and local communities intervened before situations became uncontrollable. There were other clashes in the 1980s and 1990s. State and federal governments and Islamic organizations have had to intervene in the conflicts more than once.⁶⁸

These conflicts have a number of implications. They have weakened the authority of the sultan of Sokoto as the head of all Nigerian Muslims. Today, a sizable number do not even respect the occupant of the office. Yahaya of Katsina once described the sultan as a Muslim whose only duty was to wait for the moon to appear so he could announce the beginning of Ramadan. The hold of JNl has also been weakened. In the 1960s, members of the Sufi brotherhoods thought that JNl was opposed to them, given

Gumi's influence in JNI, they were probably right. When the Sufi worked hard in the 1970s to minimize Gumi's influence in JNI, one consequence was the emergence of the *Izala* as a new opposition force. Muslims, like Christians, are divided both by ethnicity and class, which division affects the way the religion is interpreted. The poor tend to see themselves as more devout and committed than the rich. This perception generates resentment of the rich and enables reform-minded religious leaders to recruit followers with minimal efforts.

The conflicts within the *tariqa* on the one hand and between the *tariqa* and its enemies on the other have been a source of worry and embarrassment to Muslim political and religious leaders. Various attempts and suggestions have been made to minimize these conflicts or to put an end to them altogether. Sultans and emirs, military generals and politicians have all intervened, to little effect. Suggestions have been made, some of them very revolutionary indeed Muslims should stop calling one another infidels, and provocative preachings, sermons and audio cassettes should be prohibited.

69 Islamic leaders say that Muslims must not themselves be divided if they do not want the north's regional solidarity to be threatened and destroyed. The names of dan Fodio and *Sardauna* Bello are always invoked to appeal to the warring factions.

The conflict is unlikely to go away for a long time, and it may perhaps assume some other dimensions. The Sufis and the non-Sufis still both count their members in the millions. The building of separate mosques, appointments of different imams, and literature published by each to expose the weaknesses of the other, continue to highlight the differences and to sharpen identities. Both groups invade each other's

territories so as to convert and criticize. Even areas that appear to be dominated by a single group, like the Tijaniyya in the Niger-Benue Confluence, are experiencing penetration from anti-Sufi groups. Ambitions for leadership, the permanent need to reform Islam and adapt to changes, and the changing nature of Nigerian society will continue to create divisions among Muslims. Most importantly, the membership of the Sufis and the non-Sufis are not confined to Nigeria, but are transnational. Developments elsewhere will continue to affect events in Nigeria. Religious leaders with new Islamic visions of the world will always emerge as subversive forces from the outside. Enthusiastic local leaders will always search for insurgent forces to create a role for themselves. And foreign countries will continue to have vested interests in the ways many of these issues are resolved. Saudi Arabia and Libya will therefore continue to support anti-Sufi campaigns, and Iran is unlikely to abandon the Nigerian Shiites.

9

The War of Words: Hate Literature and Verbal Violence

While physical violence is the most public expression of hostility, it does not represent all the manifestations of religious crisis in Nigeria. Through verbal aggression, Nigerian Muslims and Christians continue their fighting and competition, creating a more or less permanent state of warfare of some kind. Even those who regard themselves as law-abiding and peaceful either underplay the power of words to hurt and incite or deny altogether that they have the power to cause harm. Through sermons, public speeches, writings, and revivals, each religion has made the other into a primary concern. Nigerian Christianity cannot be fully understood today without analyzing its perception of Islam, and the same is true also of Islam in relation to Christianity. A good Muslim is one who is able to withstand Christian conversion tactics and campaigns. A good Christian is also one who is able to confront Islam and challenge the Qur'an's authority.

Symbolic violence has become a permanent feature of religious competition, sometimes setting the stage for physical assaults or acting as a postscript to physical violence, as we have seen in previous chapters. The Nigerian environment has become polluted with a war of words conducted in almost every place of worship, in the public arena, in schools and colleges, and in private homes. When I asked a Catholic relative of mine to follow me into an Islamic bookstore in Lagos, he declined, saying that "such a place is a slaughterhouse where the skulls of Christians contain the blood used for ablution." Later in the evening, he and his wife gave me a

one-hour lecture on the evils of Islam, and warned me to "be vigilant, ready to defend myself against murderers." During the same week, I traveled to Kaduna, where I stayed with a Muslim friend. He, in turn, lectured me on the atrocities of Christianity, how the civilization it has built will crumble under the weight of selfishness and greed. "Jesus, their Christ," he said, "is the reincarnation of the devil." Both of these views are, to say the least, blasphemous.

As some of the literature cited in this chapter shows, there is nothing peculiar or strange in the statements of my two acquaintances. Nor are such views reflections of ignorance or illiteracy. Both have university degrees, are widely traveled, and are members of the comfortable Nigerian upper class. This chapter examines how symbolic violence is conducted, through pamphlets, pulpits, the media and other forums. We begin with a discussion of Muslim stereotypes of Christians, move to the way Christians view Muslims, and ends with an analysis of the implications of this war of words for religious tension and violence.

Islamic Stereotyping and Perceptions of Christianity

Many Muslim leaders and preachers interviewed for this book emphasized repeatedly that Christianity cannot teach the true existence of a perfect God because such an important task is left only to Islam. To such Muslims, no one else can share in the nature and attributes of God. One prominent Islamic scholar recites a passage in the Qur'an three times in Arabic and in succession to bring home his point: "Say: He is God, the one and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him."

1 Muslims show displeasure with the Christian equation of Jesus Christ with God, "a belief that is abhorrent to us."² Sermons and some literature have focused on this comparison between Jesus Christ and God, dismissing it as "an antithesis of the Absolute perfection of

Allah."³ Muslims think that Christians fall on the Bible to believe that Jesus and God are the same, and this belief means that Jesus shares the nature of God and he is in every way like God.

In one published reaction, a Muslim author quotes extensively from the Bible to dispute this belief.⁴ According to this anonymous author, "to say that Jesus is God is not only a mockery of Godhood, but blasphemy of the lowest order and insult to the intelligence of men."⁵ Drawing from several supposedly relevant quotations from the Bible, the following points are intended to prove that Christ was a man, and not divine: he was born as

a child, he was created from the seed of David, he was the fruit of the loins of David, he had ancestors ("The generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham,"), he had a gender, and he sucked at the breast of a woman.

The point in all these citations is not at all complicated to understand, especially to Muslims: no God would have such attributes. The Islamic God has no son or father, and it regards the Prophet Muhammad as a servant, not a son, of Allah. Muslims appreciate all the attributes mentioned above as qualities not of any God, but of a regular person. The historical sketch, from the Islamic point of view, is that Jesus was born an ordinary child by a woman who suffered birth pains; that his lineage can be traced to David; that his sex is identifiable; that he lived on breast milk as a baby; that his place and time of birth are known; that as an adult, he rode an ass, ate and drank to survive, lived a miserable poor life, bought shoes and clothes, and paid his taxes. For Muslims, no God can be expected to be defined in such human ways. Christians, of course, will dispute neither these assertions about Jesus nor the Biblical passages supporting them, but they will reach the opposite conclusion.

Beyond such biographical accounts are the Bible-supported characterizations of Jesus as imperfect: he was powerless ("I can of mine own self do nothing"); he was ignorant of the time and season, he was unlettered, and had to learn through experience. The argument here is the same: Jesus cannot be divine if God is omniscient and omnipotent. Jesus was, moreover, continuously tempted by the devil, and his mission is described as tainted and unclear.

6

The remainder of the book portrays Jesus as a bad prophet whose followers deserve pity. He is accused of racism: he was a Jew, he

came for the Jews, he regarded gentiles as dogs, and he describes himself as king of the Jews. He is portrayed as powerless: he complained variously of hunger, thirst, sleeplessness, sadness, weariness, and sorrow. He groaned and wept, and could be hysterical and weak. He fought and saber-rattled,⁷ and he was always on the run from one problem or the other.⁸ The end of such a false god was predictable: he was captured, humiliated, exposed and destroyed. The pamphlet closes with a summary:

According to the quotations of the Bible . . . we find that Jesus did neither share the nature of God nor is he in every way like God. He is, therefore, definitely not God! . . . Preachers in Christ will never succeed in convincing the Muslims that Jesus was anything other than a natural man and prophet of God, sent unto the house of Israel to bear the good news of the coming of

the Kingdom of God, which prophecy was fulfilled with the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Sallal Laahu Alaihi Wa Sallam).

9

I have not met an Islamic preacher or author who accepts Jesus as the son of God. They all talk about the "absolute unity of God," quoting the Qur'an: "This is Jesus the Son of Mary; this is the statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It beseemeth not God to beget a son."¹⁰ According to Islamic belief, it is heretical to call Jesus the son of God, because it raises the status of another being to that of Allah. Jesus was a prophet, an ordinary person: holy, but not a Messiah. He is mentioned twenty-five times in the Qur'an, but no mention is made of his death on the cross or the miraculous birth presented in the Biblical gospels.¹¹

The second main tenet of Christian faith—the crucifixion of Christ—is denied by Muslims. Any sermon or tract that mentions the name of Jesus is sure to reaffirm this denial. Crucifixion is treated as a negation of his prophethood.¹² The Qur'an denies that the Jews killed Jesus or crucified him,¹³ and the thought of a prophet being killed on the cross is repugnant to them: "How could God allow His chosen messenger Jesus Christ to bear ignominy and nakedness of the cross?"¹⁴

A review of the points presented to counter the Christian belief on crucifixion is common knowledge among literate Nigerian Muslims, and I met with no one who did not believe them. I intend to take a few examples from the works of important preachers, like Ahmad Deedat, the author of several famous anti-Christian pieces.¹⁵ In *Was Christ Crucified?* Deedat informs his Muslim readers that this was not so, that from the very beginning, doubts were expressed about the crucifixion, but that the Catholic Church branded the views as

heresies and exterminated those who made the claims.¹⁶ Deedat quotes profusely from the Bible, which he asserts prove his point that Jesus did not die on the cross. Deedat interprets the Last Supper as a discreet preparation for war.¹⁷ Some of his disciples responded by arming themselves because Jesus was determined to fight the Jews. What he did next, according to Deedat, was to move his disciples, now an army ready for war, to an upper room in the city. The Gethsemane where Jesus withdrew to pray became a fortified place:

The primary motive of Jesus for going there was not to pray. He could have prayed at home. Nor was it necessary to take with him eleven stalwarts, some armed with swords, if his purpose was mere prayer. During this fateful night, not once did he ask his disciples to join him in prayer. It is obvious to every mind that his motive was defence, and the strategy he employed was as brilliant as taught in Sandhurst today. He deployed his men to best advan-

tage. Out of the eleven he placed EIGHT at the GATE, saying "SIT YE HERE, WHILE I GO AND PRAY YONDER." Making them to sit at the entrance of Gethsemane is a sure proof that he did not take them to this garden to join him in prayer.

18

Jesus created a double line of defense, with eight at the gate and an inner core of three "armed to the hilt as circumstances would permit." He was to be disappointed to discover that his disciples fell asleep in such a moment of danger. Having lost the battle to protect himself, he pretended to be dead on the cross, was brought down after three hours, went to hide in a sepulcher, lived in disguise for a while, and died a natural death.

In another freely-distributed manuscript, Deedat describes the crucifixion as a myth invented by dishonest people to hide the ordinary death and secret burial of Jesus.¹⁹ In another example, *The Myth of the Crucified Saviour*,²⁰ W. J. Sheard, a preacher, condemned the belief in the crucifixion as a deliberate art of deceit by Christians. Drawing heavily from the Bible, he points out contradictions in the testimonies of the different gospels, questions their historicity, and concludes that Jesus Christ was never nailed on the cross, but that another person was crucified in his place. Yet another book by the famous Yoruba newspaper columnist al-Hajj A. D. Ajijola, prodigiously cites the Bible to warn Muslims and others never to believe the crucifixion story.²¹

These Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad's superiority to Jesus is affirmed in many ways. To them the mission of the Prophet Muhammad is more divine and uncorrupted all previous messages before him were unpreserved, and that of the Prophet Muhammad is the seal. Jesus is portrayed as a good prophet, but one whose mission

was debased by the Jews.²² "Modern Christianity," asserted a preacher,

in its creed and practice, strikes one more as an adopted religion than a revealed one. The prevalent Christian doctrines and ideologies are so much deviated from their divine origin that the present form of Christianity may well be called a substitute for the Mosaic Law and the original teaching of Jesus Christ. The way the Christians conduct services in their chapels, the doctrine of Trinity, the Incarnation theory, the law of Atonement and Ascension, the immortality of Jesus and his Sonship, all these Christian beliefs and practices contradict the Biblical accounts in the form they exist at present.²³

There are just too many lies told about Jesus, from his birth to death, the story goes, which is not the case with the Prophet Muhammad.²⁴ The

miracles of Jesus are discounted: they were possible only with the permission of God, not because of his own power, which explained why he failed in others.

The so-called verdict of Barnabas, found in the controversial *Gospel of Barnabas*, is a widespread belief among the Muslim intelligentsia used to discredit Christianity. So many controversies surround Barnabas and his gospel, a work described as apocryphal by a number of Christians. His "gospel" was translated and edited from Italian into English and published in 1907. Muslims believe in the gospel, because it lends support to some of their claims. The popularity of the book in Nigeria is enhanced because it is cheaply printed and widely distributed by the Islamic Publications Bureau, with an introduction and appendices written by Islamic scholars. When supplies of the book run low, Muslims explain that Christians buy and burn them in order to hide the truth.

Barnabas, the Muslim scholars say, was one of the twelve apostles of Christ, one of the three leading apostles, in fact. Like some other disciples, he allegedly wrote a detailed account of Christ's life, accepted as canonical until 325 A.D., when the Council of Nicea ordered that it be destroyed and that anyone with a copy be executed. Because Barnabas did not agree with the other gospels on the early Christian church, his gospel was suppressed and condemned in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. According to this gospel, Jesus Christ was substituted for another person and, therefore, did not die on the cross.

25 Rather, he was taken up to heaven, but will reappear in this world near the "end of time." At this time, he will be recognized by the Jews as a Messiah and by Christians as an ordinary human being, and he will die a natural death as a sign of the imminence of the final judgement. According to this gospel, Jesus foretold the coming of the

Prophet Muhammad and the rise of Islam, repudiated the doctrine of Jesus's divinity, atonement, and death on the cross.

Some Muslim preachers dismiss the Bible altogether as inauthentic, misleading, and confusing. In a well-circulated pamphlet, *Let the Bible Speak*, the author attributes the unreliability of the Bible to the fact that words credited to Jesus Christ were not directly composed by him:

It is unfortunate that Jesus Christ has left for us nothing as authoritative as the Prophet Muhammad has done. In the Qur'an are the teachings of Islam in their unsullied purity. . . . Of the sayings and actions of Jesus as reported in the Bible there are admittedly many which are spurious, false. . . . It is undeniable that attempts were made, for sectarian and other divisive reasons, to fake sayings and attribute them to the Prophet.²⁶

Many Muslim preachers hold the Bible in contempt, denouncing it as a book that is constantly being revised,

27 as an unreliable "record of the latest scientific investigations,"²⁸ as fraudulent in many ways,²⁹ as composed by fallible human beings instead of God,³⁰ as corrupted by dishonest authors, and as one that has been altered and changed so many times that it has no resemblance to any original scripture.³¹

In response to Christians who refer to what the Qur'an has to say about Jesus and the Bible, Nigerian Muslim scholars maintain that the Qur'an never authenticates the Bible, in spite of the many references to it. They make a distinction between the *Injil*, *Taurat*, *Zabur*, and the *Suhuful Ibrahim* (the Scrolls of Abraham) and the Bible. To take two cases, they say the *Injil* (Gospel) includes only the original revelations to Jesus (as in Matthew 9:35 or Mark 8:35) and not the revelations to Mark, Luke, John, or Matthew, and excludes the writings of Paul, Jude, James, and Peter. These scholars say that the Christian New Testament is an unworthy corruption of the core *Injil*. Similarly, when these scholars refer to the *Taurat* (Torah), they mean only God's revelations to Moses; the remainder of the first five books of the Bible they dismiss as hearsay.

The Qur'an, on the other hand, is treated as sacred, containing only words revealed by God.³² Christianity is derided as less than serious, with most Christians praying once a week at most, and in the worst case, appearing only at their baptism, marriage, and death. Such irreligious people, who rely on a history book rather than a divine revelation, have nothing to teach Muslims.

Christian converts to Islam are asked to render disparaging testimonies about Christianity. In Nigeria, such converts are hard to

find, but realizing that there are many such converts among African-Americans, Nigerian preachers seek their testimonies and give them wider publicity. The Daawat-ul-Islamiyyat Book Centre, for instance, reprinted and freely circulated a book called *Why I Accept Islam*³³ by J. Gilcrease, a former Baptist teacher. In this manuscript, Gilcrease dismisses Christian teachings, rejects the Sonship of Jesus and the theory of the Trinity, and concludes that "the way of Islam is the only path of righteousness." Gilcrease and many Nigerians with knowledge of the Bible go to the extent of pointing out that the Christian Holy Book is an affirmation of the mission of the prophet Muhammad and of Islam. There is justification for al-Shari'a in the Bible, they claim,³⁴ and the prophecy of Muhammad was foretold in the Old Testament.³⁵ Muhammad was the last of the prophets, greater than Jesus, and Islam is the religion which completes a long history begun by Adam and continued by Abraham, and is the most superior of all religions.

The Islamic elite projects an image of arrogance. It maintains that Islam is the majority religion in Nigeria, and that this fact justifies control of the state by Muslims. Fundamentalists and even some moderates continue to believe that Islamic expansion will accelerate, and that eventually Christianity will become insignificant. There is even an intellectual rationalization for the end of Christianity as a religion: its association with imperialism and capitalism, it is believed, will bring about its doom. A pamphlet published in the United Kingdom, widely circulated in Nigeria and often quoted by Islamic leaders, presents the most common rationalization for the end of Christianity:

Christianity repels the African because of its association with imperialism and colonialism and because of its identification with the racist attitudes of his former (at places even present) oppressors. On the contrary the Muslims led the fight against imperialism and colonialism, and Islam is certainly not identified with any particular race. Moreover, the pronounced equalitarian accent and other attractive features of Islam because it embodies the last guidance sent by the Creator, lends it a special appeal to the hearts and minds of the newly awakened Africans, as it did to so many other nations. By contrast, Christianity continues to remain associated with the oppressive and exploitative system under which they have suffered for so long. Add to that the incomprehensible, let alone irrational, nature of its dogma, and the tremendous doctrinal schisms of the different Christian churches, and it would be clear why Christianity has lost its appeal despite the fantastic resources at its disposal and the highly organised missionary work directed to convert people to Christianity. Africa as a whole is the only continent where the Muslims are in a majority, and where the minority status of the Muslims in some areas might be considered as a temporary phase that will change in the course of time. Islam could be the driving force for the unification of the entire continent as it has been for centuries.

The implications of this arrogance are many. Christians are urged to convert, and a few who do provide opportunities for celebration.³⁷

Nowhere is the attack more forceful and successful than in the bestseller bearing the rather unsubtle title *Why You Should Never Be A Christian*.³⁸ The book is described by its authors as a handbook for preachers desiring to propagate Islam and fight Christianity, "the rival."³⁹ Citing the Prophet Muhammad's saying that "strategy is part of war," it warns all Muslim preachers not only to understand Islam but also the Bible and the "diabolical presentation" of Christian missionaries. The book is meant to meet "the aggressive evangelical Crusade of the Christians which is full of deceit and falsification of historical analysis" and to show that Christianity is "no match

for Islam."

40 Preaching and conversion to Islam must be aggressive if the Christian agents of evil are to be successfully challenged.

Christianity must be confronted and overcome, argue the authors. The handbook tells all preachers to say that Jesus is neither God nor the son of God, but a mere servant of God; that he is neither a savior nor an intercessor, but a sinner like all men. The ministry of Jesus is characterized as restricted to only the people of Israel, and not to the world at large. The trinity is dismissed as an imaginative fiction. They argue that the Bible, with its many contradictions and revisions, cannot be divine, nor does it make any adequate description of Christianity. Paul was an obfuscator who put words into the mouth of Jesus and further corrupted the meanings of the Old Testament. The handbook warns all Muslims that the Bible is "the most dangerous book on earth. Keep it under lock and key."⁴¹

Christianity is bad, and so are most Christians, according to the handbook. The book catalogues such issues as the activities of fake prophets, the commercialization of Christianity, the proliferation of churches, the performance of false miracles, and other lapses to warn all of its readers to avoid Christianity "to be a Christian is to be gullible."⁴² The book lists a number of prominent Christians who had converted to Islam, local people as Segun Akinyele, the son of late I. B. Akinyele, the king of the city of Ibadan and a staunch Christian, and international figures as Muhammad Ali, the boxer, and the folk singer Cat Stevens (now Yussuf Islam). It cited an account in *Yankee International* of 22 April 1983 reporting the conversion of Neil Armstrong, the famous American astronaut. According to this report, upon landing on the moon, Armstrong heard the echo of the Muslim prayer call of *azzan*, and on his return decided to convert. A point-by-

point comparison of the two religions is made to demonstrate Islam's uniqueness and superiority:

1. (a) All muslims have just one Qur'an which has not been edited and will never be edited because it contains Allah's words. Not even the Prophet Muhammad could edit the Qur'an (Qur'an 10:15).

(b) The christians have different Bibles according to denominations and they are subject to review from time to time *e.g.* Catholic Bible, Jehovah's witness Bible *etc.*

2. (a) All muslims irrespective of ethnic, language, geographical and historical barriers have just one way of greeting "Salaam Alekum warahmatullah wabarakatuhu." This is universal.

(b) The christians do not have a universal way of greeting one another . . .

3. (a) The muslims pray five times a day at specified periods.

(b) The Christian denominations pray at any time without any specified

period. Some regard worship as Daraprin

43 (Sunday Sunday medicine) and others pray once daily.

4. (a) The muslims have their congregational prayers on Friday and this is universal.

(b) Some Christians have their congregational prayers on Saturdays *e.g.* The Seventh Day Adventist while others have theirs on Sundays. The third category (The Jehovah's Witnesses) do not believe in service but prefer going from house to house in condemnation of the earlier two groups.

5. (a) All muslims celebrate Eid-el Fitri and Eid-el Kabir.

(b) Some Christians groups *e.g.* The Jehovah Witnesses do not celebrate Easter and Christmas.

6. (a) Muslims all over the world are enjoined (if they can afford the cost) to gather in Mecca at a period once a year. This is the largest gathering of all human races known in the whole world-Qur'an 22:27.

(b) The Christians do not have such a gathering and they go to Jerusalem (despite the fact that there is no divine instruction to do so) just arbitrarily, while the Catholics go to Rome.

7. (a) All muslims face one direction, *i.e.* the Qibla, when they pray.

(b) Christians have no single direction where they face for prayers, or service.

8. (a) Muslims can pray in any mosque where the time of prayer meets them.

(b) Christians can only pray in the church of their denominations. When they travel and cannot find the type of church where they normally pray, that means no service for the period.

Islam is the truth, All others are false.

The Christian Image of Islam

Christians fight back by attacking Islam, using similarly unsophisticated methods and quoting from the Qur'an to support their assertions. Islam is presented by Christian preachers as incapable of giving any practical guidance to society or individuals. Islamic practices are seen as frivolous.

Christians themselves have adopted the strategy of using Muslim converts to Christianity as agents of discredit. I mentioned the case of Rev. Bako in chapter 6 above, in connection with his attack on the Qur'an having been a factor in the Kafanchan riot. It is important to examine this strategy at some length, since it provokes anger among Muslims, and great delights among Christians. Muslim-to-Christianity conversions are far more numerous than the reverse, and converts thereby produced are asked by

preachers and churches to render testimonies. A number of such testimonies have been published.

44

The story of Paul Jinadu provides a case study,⁴⁵ one that has been repeated many times in many variations. Jinadu was born in 1942 to a Muslim household; his original name was Mohammed Ali Monsuru. He later converted, and changed his name to Paul because "the dramatic way he met Jesus was similar to the conversion of the apostle Paul."⁴⁶ He describes his parents as good Muslims, rich and generous donors to the local mosque. He was brought up a Muslim and sent to a Qur'anic school, where his teacher took a special interest in him. Islam, he said, was in his bones: he would read and recite the Qur'an every day, he accepted Allah, and he was immersed in the atmosphere of Islam "the call of the faithful to prayer five times a day, the feast of Ramadan, the celebrations of Mohammed's birthday and the excitement of welcoming home pilgrims to Mecca."⁴⁷ There could be no better way to serve God, he thought.

His conversion was to prove him wrong, and caused him to reflect deeply. What he discovered was unflattering to Islam. He diminished the faith of his parents, saying they were lax Muslims "interested in making money and gaining influence in high places."⁴⁸ He claimed that although he took Islam seriously, he did not know God because he was not taught to know Him. Neither did he love Him because Islam taught that "God was to be feared and obeyed," not loved.⁴⁹ He lived under the shadows "of his angry gaze." He had never compared Islam with Christianity, and he had never suspected even for a moment that he would ever convert to another religion, because "the fear of man" kept most Muslims in the fold out of respect for family honor.

His conversion was described as a miracle, such a wrenching change from his former life and religious outlook that for eighteen months he wondered if he really was himself. He said that he was neither aware that anyone before him had converted to Christianity, nor could he imagine why anyone would want to. What drove him to Christianity? He begins his testimony by discrediting Islam and polygamy. So-called Muslims dabble in the occult, he says, using portions of the Qur'an to cast spells or give protection. His mother was a junior wife of a polygamous man. Other wives were threatened by her status and beauty and threatened to get rid of her through witchcraft. "Yes, they were Muslims, but they would go to the devil to do their dirty work."⁵⁰ These other women wanted to kill both him and his mother. He never knew who to trust, and his mother regarded everyone as an enemy. She sought to protect him by any means, sending

him to England in 1957 at the age of 14 to finish his education in peace and safety.

It was in Norbury, near Croydon, that his landlady insisted that he come with her family to church. Not wanting to offend his landlady and no mosque nearby, he became a "temporary Christian" for five years. For his Advance Level examination he traveled to Chelmsford, Essex, and invited to a crusade, where he met a large group of happy Christians and experienced the first faith healing and miracles in his life. He saw a lame man walk, and became convinced of the power of Jesus. He began to think that Jesus could forgive all his sins, including his failure to pray five times a day for five years and his ingestion of pork against Islamic injunctions. He had never seen a miracle before, and they were especially convincing to him because Prophet Muhammad's name could not be used to command a lame person to walk. And while all these miracles were going on, he himself saw Jesus: "he simply stood in front of me, arms outstretched in love, and looking into my face he smiled. He came and was gone in seconds, but the encounter changed my life."

51 He abandoned his plan to attend medical school, opting instead for a theological school under the opposition of his mother. He later became a successful preacher, and on his own account, has the ability to perform miracles.

Jinadu and others like him could not understand why anyone would want to be a Muslim. He created binary opposition that offended Muslims a great deal:

No Muslim is able to talk about God in the personal way that we born again Christians can. The way Mohammed points does not lead to a definite saving knowledge of God. It is a case of fulfilling the requirements of the five pillars of Islam and hoping for the best. There is

no assurance of salvation. Nor can there be, since salvation is not found in any other. Only Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.⁵²

Jinadu ended his story with an appendix on Jesus and the Qur'an, which he reads as an acknowledgement of the mission of Jesus.⁵³

Many Christian authors say that the Prophet Muhammad not only knew about the mission of Jesus Christ, but he urged his followers to accept him and his teaching. Some add that his understanding of history and Christianity is limited, and that his comments as expressed in the Qur'an are confused, poor, and meager.⁵⁴ They cast aspersions on the prophet of Islam and denigrate its holy books.

Educated southern Christians view Muslims as backward and conservative. This view has a deeply-rooted history. In colonial Nigeria, Western

education conferred more prestige than Qur'anic education, and it gave the new elite more power and prestige. Western education became synonymous with progress. Because northern Nigeria was slow in developing institutions for Western education, it began to be accused of conservatism. In the 1950s, for instance, only a tiny population was able to speak and write in the English language in Bauchi and Kano emirates. Of a population of 12 million in the region, only one-quarter could effectively use the English language.

55 Treatment of women in the area was heavily condemned women did not go to schools, hold jobs, or play any role in politics and Islam was held responsible for all this. Such a view has persisted till this very day, although the problems have been addressed by Muslims. For instance, most areas now promote the education of girls, elementary schools are commonplace, and universities have been established in most states. The allegation of backwardness was made again in the mid-1970s during the introduction of universal primary education for all Nigerians. Whereas the south embraced the idea with enthusiasm, caution was expressed in many parts of the north. Those who wanted to protect Qur'anic schools argued that public education would destroy them. Some indeed believed that universal Western education would destroy their culture, downgrade moral values, and corrupt Islam. Southerners did not seem to understand these fears, and viewed them as evidence of Muslim conservatism. Women in purda, extensive polygamy, early marriage, and the small number of professional women is still adduced as evidence of backwardness by southern Christians.

Just as Muslims have rallied around *Why You Should Never Be a Christian* as a definitive indictment of Christianity, Nigerian Christians have come to regard a 1990 book by G.J.O. Moshay called

Who Is This Allah? as almost an adjunct to the Bible.⁵⁶ The book underwent three printings in its first year alone, and has been reprinted several times since. Dedicated to those Christians who died in the Kaduna violence of 1987, *Who is this Allah?* was intended primarily to disparage Islam. "If Allah is God and the Koran is true, the christian can be sure he is lost no matter how zealous he may be."⁵⁷ The author further hopes that through the book, Muslims will discover the falsehoods of Islam and convert to Christianity.

The book begins by asking the question "Is Allah God?" Is He "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?" He set out to answer by consulting the Hadith, the Qur'an, other Islamic books, and the Bible. In seeking an answer, he believed that the origin of the Qur'an was important. Moshay questions the claim that the Qur'an was a book of revelation that "dropped from heaven." It was compiled, he said, by the Caliphs who succeeded the

Prophet Muhammad out of a desire to have a sacred book like the Christians and Jews. Moshay asserts furthermore that a being called Allah did indeed speak to the Prophet Muhammad, but that he was in fact and still is a manifestation of Satan.

"Violence in Islam is real and it is spiritual," declares Moshay.

58 He cites many passages of the Qur'an and Hadith to support his assertion⁵⁹ that Muslims would kill to spread their faith. Many of the incitements, he said, are directed at Christians and Jews:

There are so many incitements against Christians . . . that we find it hard to believe that anybody can be a real practising Muslim now or then and not hate Christians. . . . Any Muslim who is not violent (secretly or openly) is hardly a real Muslim. . . . A typical Muslim must be violent, especially if he expects to get any reward in the Muslim heaven.⁶⁰

The Prophet Muhammad himself was a warrior, using war as a means of propagation. The violent recruitment methods continue, says Moshay, in addition to newer techniques such as the use of oil money to bribe people into accepting Islam and the reckless increase of the Muslim population through polygamous marriages.⁶¹

The Dangers of Stereotyping and Negative Images

There is limited meeting ground on theological or doctrinal issues between Nigerian Christians and Muslims. Christians and Muslims are made to believe that their ways of life are different, irreconcilable, and sometimes antagonistic. Preachers freely mislead their audiences into believing constructed negative untruths about the other religion. One preacher and writer made this assertion to his Christian audience:

Let it be understood at the outset that there can be no reconciliation between these disparate religions and absolutely no compromise in these philosophies which are so at variance and disaccord with one another.

. . . the two systems are discordant in principle, antagonistic in purpose and . . . Islam is repugnant to the spirit and character of Christianity.⁶²

Another preacher, educating his Christian audience, revealed that Muslims worship an idol called Allah, are very violent, and must kill at least one Christian to go to their reward. Born-again Christian preachers take a different tack, asserting that all Muslims will one day be converted to Chris-

tianity to save their souls.

63 Some have gone so far as to propose methods for achieving this mass conversion.⁶⁴

Preachers on both sides claim to be knowledgeable both of their religion and of the religion of their opponents. A number of the more combative Christian authors are actually able to read the Qur'an in Arabic, either because they were formerly Muslims or because they went out of their way to learn it. Their Muslim rivals usually fall on English translations of the Bible, or in some cases quote from the Bible in indigenous Nigerian languages. These preachers boast that there is nothing they do not know about the religion of their rivals. But in seeking knowledge, they are not after truth or common ground, but difference and division. By claiming competence in the understanding of a rival religion, the critic is trying to impress those of his own religion. In a sense it is a fraudulent manipulation of knowledge for selfish ends. But this knowledge is invariably very shallow indeed. A few verses are cited selectively and out of context, with no regard for history.

Young Nigerians are socialized into conflict, learning to employ the words of adults in characterizing others' religion. Steeped at home and in their schools with the language and values of hatred, teenagers learn the hostility, resentment, and violence of the adults around them. It is not surprising that they take part in virtually all the major outbreaks of violence.

The minds of many people have become poisoned to the point that academic discussion and appreciation of the views of others is difficult. Stereotypes have been constructed around such derogatory and unspecific terms as infidel, bad, and unjust. It is difficult to find

religious groups that do not maintain damaging stereotypes about others. As much of the religious literature shows, every religious group has a set of generalizations about its rivals. When such stereotypes are carried to extremes, every person becomes a victim of generalizations: "there is no such thing as a good Muslim" is one such extreme example, which makes no differentiation among the millions of individual adherents to the faith. Stereotypes are used as an excuse to condemn without making sense of Nigeria's history or its contemporary reality. Changing or modifying beliefs is difficult because the arguments are not carried out in a rational fashion: contradictory evidence is ignored or discounted, and extremist beliefs will not accommodate variance.

Even a bigot, given the opportunity to interact with members of an opposing religion, might be impressed in an exchange of ideas. This would not diminish bigotry, however, but it would call for an explanation of why

some supposedly different people are good or at least tolerable. Most would say that such people are exceptions, which cannot educate the bigot, but does minimize the need to avoid interacting with people of other religions.

Stereotypes express fear and anxiety about the domination of others. Christians in central Nigeria complain about Islam in relation to their marginalization from power. Southern Christians talk about Islamic domination in relation to the control of the federal government.

Members of both religions are defensive. Muslims see themselves as the best, even as progressive, no matter what the Christians say; Muslim areas in Nigeria are more developed than the backward Christian South America; Muslims are opposed to violence and can live in peace with others.

65 Muslims complain that Christians misunderstand them. In the words of JNI to the Donli Committee in 1988,

It is very often found that people who are ignorant of Islam and Muslims have wrong impressions of the Muslims. Such ignorant Christians give Muslims all sorts of bad names such as fundamentalists, "fanatics," etc as a quality for any faithful Muslims who believe in living according to Islamic injunctions. Muslims who are not serious about their religion are regarded as progressive. If the Christians knew Islam well, they would not waste their time trying to stand in their way as they would realize that . . . nothing could stand in the way of the real faithful Muslims.⁶⁶

Christians in turn argue that their religion is the best, that the Bible is holy, that the contradictions are misunderstood by "evil Muslims" who often misrepresent them and their faith.⁶⁷

The atmosphere has become so polluted that the smallest issue can create a major crisis. Verbal aggression is not confined to statements

and rhetoric made in places of worship and open-door sermons, but it penetrates popular culture and politics. Expressions of hate can be found in music, theater, radio, and television even in dramatic programming and comedies. Humor is used in many radio and television programs to make subtle comments that remind people of tension, communicate malice, and offer suggestions on how to tolerate one another only for a short while. Jokes, even when they make people laugh, do communicate sinister intentions, lending a voice to conflict and violence.⁶⁸ Jokes serve to reinforce stereotypes and to remind their hearers of the ongoing crisis. Nigerian music, too, fuses ethnicity with religion and violence; other songs couch religious issues in political terms.

Islam and Christianity are both attempting to convert people from the other faith. There is mutual distrust, and each presents the other as

dangerous. For many Christians, Islam embodies the spirit of the Antichrist. Salman Rushdie's notorious book became popular among Nigerian Christians for its criticism of Islam; even those who had never seen or read the book cite it with gusto. Muslims, in contrast, reacted against it, cursing Rushdie and similar authors for blasphemy against Islam and the Qur'an.

69

There are hate crimes, brutal attacks on groups and individuals because of their religious views. That is to say, bigotry and bias are not just expressed in words, but are acted out in the streets when a crime is directed against a person purely because of his religion. Previous chapters provide very concrete examples. Evidence of growing hate crimes include the shouting of slurs, abusive graffiti, angry and nasty talk in places of worship, and even assault and murder. Every case, large or small, is a signal that a group is unsafe and that any individual could become a victim at any time. The crises in Bauchi or Zangon-Kataf are clear demonstrations of this fact.

Hate crimes can be conducted by organized groups allegedly protecting their own religion or working toward religious purity in a particular area. This would appear to be what happened in Zaria in 1987, when students of the Ahmadu Bello University attacked Christians. Group crimes are the most dangerous, because they are committed by multiple offenders who are more likely to attack at the least opportunity or the slightest provocation. The size of the groups varies, from three to a whole community. A group can turn a coward into a warrior, an ordinary person into a gangster, a brutal attack into a sport. A few cases of victim-hunting have been reported, exemplified by the 1987 Kafanchan riots and the 1991 Bauchi riots.

Data from income and employment to characterize individuals who

commit hate crimes are limited. But, from official reports and fieldwork, we can sketch here a few sweeping points. First, they tend to be originally urban residents, perhaps because most cases take place in cities and towns or because criminals can more easily escape into a crowd. Others from the rural areas would then rush to the towns to lend their support. They are usually unemployed, and most hate crimes occur during working hours. Third, hate crimes boost the respect and standing of individuals among their peers or religious community they are spoken of as being strong and committed. One person was described as a "lion" for slaughtering a Christian in Kaduna in 1987. Fourth, individuals can reflect a narrow extremist subculture of either their community or their religious group. This explains why, for instance, Christians in Kaduna tend to talk in similar ways. Many have read some of the literature mentioned above, or heard inflammatory sermons. They have learned to hate and to rationalize hate

crimes. Hate-crime offenders stereotype their victims as bad and ungodly, and feel no guilt for attacking them.

While the perpetrators have motives, the victims can be complete strangers, attacked just for having expressed a difference. Random attacks on strangers have accompanied most of the major cases of violence. This creates an atmosphere of fearan individual in such a situation feels permanently in danger, never knowing when or from whom an attack will come. Anyone can be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Assault crimes are by nature brutal and violentstabblings, bludgeonings, and vandalism characterize all the violence of the 1980s and 1990s.

In the majority of cases, those who commit hate crimes get away with them because, first, when it involves an entire community, there is no one to report or corroborate the victims' statements. Kafanchan and Zangon-Kataf are good examples of this. Second, when crime involves gangs, a safety net exists for the members as long as no one betrays the others. Blame is shared, responsibility diluted to the point that no one knows who did what. This is what happened, for instance, in Kano and Samaru in 1987. Third, hate crimes are rationalized in religious terms: the holy books provide psychological support for all sorts of crimes, including murder. Fourth, police work is very bad. In most cases, the police were incapable of stopping activity until it has begun dying down of its own accord. The police have a terrible reputationfew Nigerians regard the police with respect, and fewer still think that they are neutral, allies, protectors, or just. Poor people and victims of violence see the police as oppressors and cheats. The police are also thought to be prejudiced. All these perceptions contribute to an atmosphere of distrust, a lack of faith in police findings, and the perception that rich people get away with violence. In the very rare cases in which offenders are punished, judgement is often little more than a slap on the wrist. And finally, the spectators of hate crimes do

nothing to prevent them, either because their sense of personal justice is satisfied by the observed brutality or just because they are simply helpless to prevent it. In all of the cases of violence in the 1980s and 1990s that have been discussed above, there were those who disagreed with the violence that others committed, but they only could watch and do little to stop it.

As a result of these factors, hate crimes have contributed to the formation and consolidation of religious groupings and identities. Those targeted for hate crimes think that their protection lies not in the hands of the state but in alliances with members of the same religion. Alliances take various forms: the formation of vigilante groups and membership in sects or organizations. Some such alliances reflect weakness. When a group thinks

that it is in the minority, its members stay in their place, living where they are told and only taking part in those economic activities tolerable to the dominant group. This would appear to be the strategy of the Igbo Christians in many small northern towns. This process has been described in the sociological literature as infantilization, a situation whereby a weak group acquires images of inferiority and are expected to behave as inferiors or even as children in such ways as they dress, or the job they do.

70 Some alliances reflect strength by creating the means to conduct counterattacks, as does CAN among Christians and JNI among Muslims. While these major alliances do protect their members, they also provide the means for organizing violence and perpetuating verbal warfare and hate crimes.

10

Conflict Management: Strategies and Options

Short-term Solutions: Coping Strategies

The federal and state governments can no longer protect religious groups, especially the minority Christian populations in the north. The Muslims claim the federal government is overprotective of Christians. Muslim fundamentalists like the Shiite groups believe the government will do whatever it can to destroy them. Each time a violent disturbance occurs, the police are unable to contain it until it is too late. As a result, no one trusts the government or the police. Individuals and religious bodies have had to come up with ways to protect themselves and to prepare for the next violent confrontation.

The most obvious and widely publicized coping strategy is the ecumenical approach. The Muslim and Christian communities have become better organized as a result of the conflicts, creating organizations in which members of the same community can form bonds. JN1, CAN, MSS, SU and other organizations provide a variety of forms of support. Local congregations serve as solidarity networks, supplying information, regular advice, notices and strategies of defense. In such places as Kano, Zaria, Kafanchan, Maiduguri, and Sokoto, groups plan for trouble that could come at any time. One Islamic organization in Bauchi rallies behind the motto, "The believers are naught else than brothers" (Qur'an 49:10) to promote solidarity.

A related strategy is the deepening of faith, in the search for a permanent source of strength and protection in religion. One of the other roles fulfilled by the hate literature discussed in the previous chapter is to strengthen faith so that members of a religious community can withstand the attacks of others. Muslims warn one another about the evils of Christianity.

1 Faith is constantly reaffirmed through various means. Both religions have taken the use of tracts to extremes, and many are received from abroad.² Local Christian publications are numerous too, with new releases appearing monthly. Some ministries specialize in publishing tracts.³ Preachers are out not only to convert so-called heathens and infidels, but to constantly reaffirm the faithful, and to remind worshippers to be in constant preparedness. Realizing that there is very little they can do, marginalized Christian communities in many northern towns become resigned to their fate, asking for divine intervention and quietly awaiting the second coming of Christ. In desperation, they interpret the events around them as signs of the second coming. Every new conversion is celebrated, both because their numbers have increased and because Christianity is perceived as becoming stronger.

A final strategy is the militant approach: countering violence with violence. Groups and individuals carry weapons with them, and places of worship have small armories. Lessons are offered in the use of small weapons, and escape routes are mapped. Vigilante activities become common as religious groups organize security and protection.⁴

Long-term Solutions: Conflict Management Options

Short-term solutions do not prevent future cases of violence, and they

tend to strengthen the identities of religious groups in such a way that they become more suspicious of one another and more ready to fight. For recent governments and religious leaders, the goal is to seek peaceful coexistence among people of different religions. But two sets of paradoxes have limited this goal. First of all, religion is supposed to promote peace, harmony, cohesion, and integration through its doctrines, preachings, social interactions, and religious leaders as role models. However, as I have explained, religion has been often manipulated to justify large-scale destruction, conflicts, discord, and chaos. Second, the role of the Nigerian state is to promote peace, stability, and development; however, state functionaries have achieved only troubles, conflicts, and poverty as a result of their constant politicking.

These paradoxes raise a number of complex questions that should be borne in mind when discussing the solutions to religious violence and crisis. Why do religion and the state negate themselves? Should we see Nigeria as a nation in the process of disintegration and seek peaceful and just means to prevent this? Should Nigerians begin to count the cost of an unstable but divided polity? Is the nationalism of one Nigeria superior to that of many Nigerias? Should the military forcefully induce national cohesion, and for how long? Is a permanent condition of self-destruction unleashed by centrifugal forces too strong to be controlled by a multiethnic, multireligious polity? If the military, varying constitutions, leadership, and vested interests cannot check religious violence and aggression, should the religious communities create autonomous frontiers and then relate on the basis of equality defined by their boundaries? Can the boundaries of states represent religious-ethnic identities? The creation of additional states in 1991, bringing the total to thirty, was probably a step in this direction. Of this number, ten are mainly Islamic, ten are Christian, and ten are mixed. If the center is the most important in the country's federal system can a rational atomization of boundaries reduce tension? And if the goal of one religion is to dominate the others, will religious riots and aggression not cut across boundaries? Can the spread of fundamentalism be confined to certain boundaries? In recent times, the spread of Shiite Islam from Iran suggests that it is difficult to contain the diffusion of ideas. Inspirations are also being drawn from Islamic movements in Algeria, whose members challenge their government with a high degree of success. In what follows, and with these and other questions in mind, I will address all the major solutions that have been proposed by a wide variety of opinions in, and outside of, Nigeria. I believe that many of them are indeed limited.

The Tolerance Thesis

Tolerance is the most common solution proposed by the Nigerian government, religious leaders, scholars, and others. Its elaboration is less complicated than other ideas: people should be allowed to worship as they choose, and should live as brothers and sisters; if they do, everything will work out. In October 1988, Babangida proposed this to the nation:

It may be a theological question whether God reveals himself or he reveals religion through his messenger, his prophet or his son. Irrespective of the position one takes on this issue, one should be reasonable enough to know

that God, like the father of any household, can never be satisfied with members of the family who quarrel, fight, undermine and sometimes kill one another in his name.

5

Some analysts seem to think that adopting tolerance nationwide is as easy as putting on a hat. Nigerians, they say, only need to change their outlook to life, accept others, put conflicts behind them, and recognize other people's differences. The country needs an "heroic act of tolerance" to survive.⁶

To promote tolerance, people suggest that religious groups hold dialogues in order to iron out their differences and to discuss solutions to burning issues. The main suggestion is that religious leaders should meet with one another by themselves, and that the government should meet with all religious leaders from time to time. A scholarly journal *Nigerian Dialogue: A Journal of Inter-Faith Studies on the Relation between Christianity and Non-Christian Religions* was even established to explore these possibilities. In 1987, Dr. C. S. Momoh, a philosophy teacher at the University of Lagos, succeeded in mobilizing about a hundred people to set up a short-lived organization, the National Association for Religious Tolerance (NARETO) to promote tolerance in the country. This was preceded by a national seminar that resulted in the publication of an incoherent four-volume collection on the theme of tolerance.⁷ NARETO suggested a pledge that all Nigerians were urged to memorize:

I believe in the Supreme Being and I subscribe to the doctrines of my own religion. I declare that adherents of other religions have similar natural rights. It is the Supreme Being alone who knows and who will have the last say on who is the genuine practitioner. I pray to Him to judge me as such and I appeal to my fellow human beings to leave that judgement to Him and to Him alone.⁸

As promulgated in the sermons and remarks of many preachers, the tolerance thesis has a number of variants based on love and the pursuit of peace and happiness. Idealist religious leaders would love to think that love, holiness, and righteousness can solve the problems of brutal and senseless violence. Sermons on peace have even entered the scholarly literature as a solution to the profound crisis.⁹ In August 1985, Pope John Paul II made a major address to Muslims in Morocco. The speech was widely reported in Nigeria, and part of it has become a suggestion to resolve the crisis:

Christians and Muslims, in general we have badly misunderstood each other, and sometimes, in the past, we have opposed and even exhausted each other

in polemics and in wars. I believe that, today, God invites us to change our old ways. We must respect each other, and we must encourage each other in good works on the path of God.

10

Yet another variant is to attribute violence and tension to "national sin" and punishment. All Nigerians should repent, pray, and fast, and the crisis will fix itself.

Intellectuals, like the crowd that Dr. Momoh assembled, propose to seek a common ground in both religions. They argue that by stressing those things that unite them, tension would be minimized. "We worship the same God" has become cliché among peacemakers. Some scholars have gone to the extent of identifying those common grounds, notably in values, ethics, and morality. They say, for instance, that both religions are monotheistic, attribute creation to God, believe in divine revelation to prophets, and share a general eschatology about the resurrection of mankind, the final judgement, hell, and heaven. There are common norms and themes on sin and punishment, and what is common to all religions is not rituals but the idea of helping people to actualize the divine spark within them.¹¹ Scholars of traditional religions, struggling to impress the public that what they teach has relevance, have also called on Nigerians to borrow from those ancient practices and to learn how those who worship the moon get along amiably with sun-worshippers.¹²

The tolerance thesis has run into trouble because of the very basic fact that no one listens to anyone else, that clashes occur all the time, that verbal aggression is a feature of Nigerian life, and most importantly, that hard-liners in most groups specifically, historically, and constantly reject tolerance. Moshay, for instance, specifically dismissed the notion of tolerance, basing his rejection not on

Christianity, but Islam itself, which recognizes two "households," that of Islam and that of "non-Islam or war." These two households cannot have the same father.¹³ For Moshay, Muslims and Christians cannot be members of the same family. Going further, Moshay says that tolerance is strange to Islam:

There is nothing like intolerance or fanaticism in Islam. All violent acts and vandalism that may be so regarded, are only normal to the religion. The so-called fanatical muslims are the real muslims. Yes, the Maitatsines, the Izala, Muslim youth organizations and their sponsors, al-Jihad groups in Lebanon, al-Mujahideens of Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and some other countries, the Muslim Students Society (MSS), the Jamat'ul Nasril Islamiyya (JNI), *etc.* These are the genuine muslims. They must establish the kingdom of God on earth.¹⁴

Neither do Muslims keep quiet. For them, to compare the Bible with the Qur'an is not just comparing apples and oranges. The Qur'an is a holy book, the Bible "mere literature, like reading Shakespeare's Hamlet."

15

Theological common ground is unlikely to be found for the simple reason that seeking a "religiously federated arrangement" is impossible, and perhaps undesirable. Religious traditions are difficult to reduce to one common cultural denominator. It is more rewarding to seek a political common ground that is acceptable in a pluralistic religious setting. The weakness of the tolerance thesis, as it is currently proposed in Nigeria, is the naiveté and idealism of its proponents. Tolerance as a moral option and political strategy requires more than rhetoric and sermons to sustain its tenability and desirability.

The constant stereotyping creates problems as well, as I pointed out in the last chapter. Preachers and religious leaders focus more on differences than similarities, indicating that people are not terribly interested in finding any common ground. As the author of *Who Is This Allah?* maintains, Allah is not the Christian God, and what appears common should not deceive anyone. This author is not speaking for himself alone. Behind such polemics are some real differences. Islam holds that human beings are all servants of God, and no one bears any resemblance to him. Christians, on the other hand, claim intimacy to God through Jesus. There are serious differences in the conception of sin, law, and prophecy, which the preachers constantly stress all the time.

In preaching tolerance as an option, the Nigerian state has failed to devise means to prevent one group from abusing the other. In

addition, it is silent on how to address the problem of equality among the different religions. Both Islam and Christianity use their numbers to prevent any resurgence of traditional religion. Islam uses its majority in the north to further suppress and marginalize Christianity. When religions are not of equal standing, or when people have a perception of inequality, tolerance becomes difficult to promote.

The greatest problem of the tolerance thesis is that it ignores the context of violence and religious competition. Different religious practices and beliefs are not the only causes of violence, but political motives and competition, class differences, economic considerations, and ethnic differences also contribute to the unrest; the tolerance thesis ignores all of these other dimensions. How are the Hausa and Kataf in Zangon-Kataf to use any religious common ground that might be discovered when their relationship is mostly conditioned by aggressive political and economic competition? Is there room for tolerance in a milieu of such profound distrust?

Is the effort to be religiously devout according to the Holy Books not contrary to the idea of tolerance? The rejection and elimination of lapses in religious practice lay at the core of the jihad of the nineteenth century, and has been important ever since. The prolonged crisis of domination and aggression between Sokoto and Kano for most of this century can best be explained by the failure of one brotherhood to tolerate the other. In recent times, the radical *Izala* movement has been fanatically opposed to many new religious innovations. Is compromise a solution, if this is destructive of distinctive identities? To the Islamic north a compromise may mean the acceptance of Western, Christian values. To the south it may mean the acceptance of Arabic values. Is there really a pragmatic, compromise solution to issues that touch on identity?

The Yoruba in the southwest have been promoted as an example of a group in which people of different faiths tolerate one another, preventing violence in the southwest. There is indeed evidence of mutual coexistence, even of religious eclecticism. However, a number of points must be borne in mind when looking at the Yoruba. In the first place, both religions have been able to draw members from the same family, group, and town, without either religion being able to attain dominance. Second, religious competition is equally as intense among the Yoruba as other groups, only that it has yet to produce violence on a major scale. Religious groups are aggressive in conversion efforts. They employ verbal aggression, and take sides in violence elsewhere. Third, a Christian elite has controlled the bureaucracies and school systems in virtually all Yoruba groups for a long time, using its position to secularize most institutions. Muslims do complain and sometimes provoke unrest, as happened during the University of Ibadan's cross crisis. Finally, Yoruba politicians, seeking to win elections at the federal level, have fallen on the Oduduwa creation myth to unite the people together on election day.

While preachers and leaders should continue to advocate tolerance, if only because they should certainly not advocate intolerance, they are best advised that it is not an alternative to policy-oriented devices to solve religious violence.

The Ethical Thesis

A related proposal to that of tolerance is that the problems posed by religion have to do more with ethical issues than politics. The idea is that if everyone is morally upright, that there will be no trouble and tolerance will

naturally emerge. The role of religion, then, should be to teach correct, ethical behavior to all Nigerians. If Nigerians comport themselves well, then it would be easy to prescribe tolerant and accommodative behavior. In recent times, many pamphlets have been published on the issue of ethics and how peace will follow it.

16 Those writings, usually shoddy, define ethics narrowly to mean a catalogue of rules of conduct, without critical evaluations of those rules and their maxims. The essential theme is that the state should focus on the moral values and spiritual contents of all religious preachings. Nigerians, proponents say, have yet to grasp the ethical norms and ethical contents of these teachings; once they do, religious killing will stop. Once again, searches have been conducted for common elements in order to translate them into ethical symbols for the country. It is believed that it is possible for a so-called national ethics to emerge. Such ethics could then be inculcated in all school children, thereby producing better Nigerians.

Always seeking the easy way out, the Nigerian government bought the ethical thesis. In 1983, the federal government came up with a concept of ethical revolution that quickly became an object of national ridicule, because its authors were corrupt and discreditable politicians. In 1986, responding to a threat posed by the membership of the OIC, the Babangida regime defined the ideal relationship between the state and religion in the ethical framework:

The political philosopher Max Weber once said "in a secular world, the only place for religion is in the area of interpersonal rather than public relations." It follows from this assertion that while a country like Nigeria with its multiplicity of religions cannot have one state religion, the need for ethical and spiritual upliftment of our citizens makes it imperative for government to encourage religious life whose neglect has caused and will continue to generate social problems including indiscipline, dishonesty,

unbridled greed and materialism and all kinds of anti-social behaviours. Ultimately, these problems, if allowed to grow and multiply, are capable of undermining the spiritual life and moral fibre of our people. In the ensuing decadence, both government and religious leaders will become increasingly irrelevant to a society without order, morality, or clearly defined individual rights or obligations. It is therefore . . . our collective responsibility and duty, to search for and articulate a mutually acceptable relationship between the various religious groups and between them and Government.¹⁷

This view has been endorsed by many religious practitioners and scholars who think that the state should move religion out of the domain of politics

into that of ethics. What the state should do is to use religion to overcome such vices as greed, ethnic strife, corruption, and violence.

While not wishing to dismiss the merits of ethics (or, to be more accurate, naive moralism), especially in a corrupt country, I think that a connection between ethical rectitude and the end of violence has not been convincingly established. Advocates assume that all Nigerians will subscribe to the same code, share similar assumptions about ethics, and will behave as honest ladies and gentlemen in competing for jobs, contracts, political offices, and other things that divide them. Nigerian political leaders, well-known for their corruption, lack the credibility to offer and pursue this option; they cannot be expected to be bound by it themselves.

The Coercion Thesis

The suggestion that overwhelming force be used to "discipline and curtail" the activities of religious leaders and groups has also been offered as a solution.

18 Some suggest the equally extreme option of banning all religions. In 1987, a group of Nigerian atheists established the Nigerian Association of Secular State Affirmation (NASSA). This organization criticized Christianity and Islam as alien religions, and called for their complete proscription in the country.¹⁹ Coercion cannot deal with religious crisis effectively; it would only affirm faith in the minds of believers and further escalate conflicts between religious groups and the state. Granted, many cases of violence have been ended through the intervention of the army and the police, but this only forces people to withdraw and await another opportunity. The underlying causes of conflict are not addressed by the coercive model.

The Purification Thesis

A number of prominent religious leaders suggest that the country could be freed of problems if everyone could be converted to the same religion. This conversion could happen peacefully or by force. It could also be accomplished by means of a carefully phased assimilation policy in which one religion would slowly and completely dominate the other, either by conversion or through the covert smuggling of values.

This thesis is commonly associated with Muslims. Alhaji Gumi believed that a time would come when most Nigerians would be converted to Islam. Islamic scholars, drawing on the examples of North Africa and the

Middle East, tend to believe that an Islamization option is the best for the country. When leaders like Khaddafi and Khomeini are lionized, it is in part because of the way in which they govern, but also because Nigerian Islamic scholars think that everybody in those countries are Muslims.

As I mentioned in the first chapter of this book, attempts were actually made in the 1950s and 1960s to embark on a massive effort to convert and Islamize central Nigeria. This effort ended without success and with serious political consequences. The *Sardauna* was reputed to have vowed to spread the Qur'an to the sea. His death did not halt the spirit of this intention, but a leader has yet to emerge with the capacity to continue its advancement. Al-Zakzaky believed that a jihadist should take the Nigerian helm, doing nothing less than converting everyone, including the Catholic Igbo, to Islam. In some ways, the demands for al-Shari'a, the strong alliances with Arab countries, and the membership in the OIC are attempts to project Nigeria as an Islamic country.

Christians are intensely afraid of the Islamization of Nigeria, or the mere mention of anything that suggests the further spread of Islam in an aggressive manner. Attempting to speak for all Christians, Justice Aniagolu, chairman of the Constituent Assembly in the 1980s, warned against such an Islamic agenda:

Our Muslim brothers in this country must learn that proselisation must be by persuasion and not by imposition. There is no way they can Islamize Nigeria by force. It will be entirely against the Nigerian Constitution for them to try to impose the Muslim faith upon other Nigerians. . . . Almighty God to whom we are all praying, does not want anybody to force another person into his own religion. God himself, who is the Alpha and Omega, has not tried to force us into any religion. He has allowed us the free will to make our choice, although He has shown us the right way.

Christian leaders refer to the tragedies and troubles in Sudan,²¹ Lebanon, and Bosnia to drive home their point.

The purification thesis is an option that will generate violence of unimaginable scale. Christians could not be expected to submit without a strong and united fight. This proposal is insensitive to non-Muslims and often crudely expressed. Even if it were possible for all Nigerians to become Muslims, moreover, the prevention of violence could not be guaranteed, as chapter 8 above has demonstrated.

Artificial Constructs

There are a few theoretical academic proposals to deal with the crisis, many of them drawn from the old Soviet Union and from the secular experiences of the United States. A socialist proposal suggests that the doctrines and rituals of religious groups be secularized so that all Nigerians can worship the same "God." How religion can be secularized is not made clear. The Nigerian state has actually extended its own secularism by taking over institutions previously controlled by religious bodies and by regulating the use of television and radio for religious broadcasts. Not only has this extension been challenged by religious groups, but it has had no impact on minimizing religious problems. The socialist proposal, moreover, is based on an incorrect reading of the history of the Soviet Union and China.

In a recent book, Enwerem proposes the construction of "a counter hegemonic religiosity for a more egalitarian Nigerian society."

22 This sounds very much like liberation theology, although he falls short of saying so. Though elegant and attractive, the details are unclear. Enwerem is not specific about how the foundation will be built, or even the historical basis that supports it.

A last example of an artificial construct is the suggestion that the country fall on the use of national symbols such as flags, pledges, and a national anthem to build a nationalism whose strength will be greater than the divisiveness of religion. This is often labeled as civil religion.²³ The regime of Obasanjo in the 1970s believed that this was possible. While this artificial construction has been mentioned over and over again, especially in the media, so far no inspiring essay has appeared to argue its worth successfully. As the case of Eastern Europe under socialist regimes shows, artificial symbols cannot

replace faith, while secularism cannot become a religion to compete with Islam and Christianity.

Epilogue

In concluding this book, I shall summarize the recent history of religious violence in Nigeria and make some remarks about the challenges of overcoming it. My discussion is organized around four major themes. First, I will highlight the defining characteristics of violence in Nigeria. Second, by looking at violence in other societies, I want to show that solutions tend to be complicated and that democracy and the nation-state do not necessarily mean that violence will disappear altogether. Third, I will point out that as long as religious and ethnic groups continue to consolidate their identities and develop different visions and images, disagreements are bound to continue and most probably escalate into violent conflict. Finally, I will show that since most incidents of violence in Nigeria have taken the form of intergroup or interregional hostility, the resolution of conflicts should be located in the context of the search for a viable nation-state. A viable, democratic nation-state may not be a cure-all solution, given the divisiveness of religious conflicts, but in the Nigerian case, it represents the most promising starting point.

The Characteristics of Religious Violence

Based on the cases that I have analyzed, it can be seen that religious violence and conflict take several forms: (a) Christians against Muslims; (b) Muslims against Muslims; (c) the challenge to the state by religious organizations; and (d) groups divided by ethnicity and religion settling their differences through violence, expressed as religious warfare. There are also national and regional dimensions to the religious conflicts. In cases involving the competition for federal power and negotiations on the constitution

and national affairs, religious conflict is national, in the form of Muslim-Christian antagonism articulated by the media, the political class and religious leaders. When religious conflict is national, regionalism adds to the religious divide, as Christianity becomes represented as the south, and Islam as the north, with competing claims over central Nigeria. Intra-religious conflicts, as in the case of Sufism against anti-Sufism or schism in Christianity, is everywhere, reflecting the spread of the religion in the country.

Regionally speaking, with respect to violence: (a) The East is peaceful because of the dominance of Christianity. (b) The West is less peaceful, but thus far, Ibadan, Lagos, and the Ilorin areas are the most volatile. Here, conflicts arise between the Muslims and Christians, with no added ethnic dimensions. Combatants in Ibadan, for instance, are Yoruba, but their competing identities are constructed around religion and not ethnicity. Conflict may intensify in this zone in the years ahead, in spite of long years of mutual coexistence. (c) The heartland of Islam and such traditional cities as Kano and Katsina. Here violence has taken three forms: first, reformist, as in the case of the Shiites in Katsina or the Maitatsine, fighting the state; second, anti-Christian; and third, directed against immigrant Christian settlers, as in Kano. Future conflicts are certain, especially between Muslims and immigrants. (d) Central Nigeria, and cities and towns on the fringes of Hausaland (usually marginalized "pagan" communities in the emirates of the nineteenth century) where violence is both religious and communal, involving confrontations between hegemonic religion (Islam) and ethnicity (Hausa-Fulani) and minority groups defined by ethnicity (Kataf) and minority religion (Christianity). The attempts to assert minority rights, using Christianity as a source of identity, will provoke an Islamic reaction and ensure the continuity of conflict. This diversity must be borne in mind in order to understand the Nigerian situation, especially if productive solutions are to be

found to the negative consequences of religious politics and violence.

Irrespective of specifics, the very first step in any case of violence is to construct the enemy, to differentiate and dehumanize it in order to justify any action visited upon it. Religious violence is justified by constructing a person or a group as different and demonizing it.

Muslims call the Christians *kaffir* and the southerners *yanmirin*.

Christians call Muslims murderers, *awon elesin imolile* (worshippers of a treacherous cult), and infidels. To cite a few examples from our cases: Marwa used various unpleasant labels even for fellow-Muslims ("slaves," and "firewood in hell"); Yahaya called religious opponents prostitutes, and a CAN official referred to Muslims as satans. Those enemies so demonized must be prevented from offering their religion or beliefs to a rival group.

When members of one religious group assert themselves, refuse to accept a minority role, and indicate a willingness to defend themselves, their rivals can construct them both as dangerous and as demons. A stigmatized group is so constructed in order to dehumanize it. In most cultures and places, it is immoral to kill the righteous, children, or minor miscreants. But it is moral to kill a devil or a demon. As in cases of racism or Nazism, stereotyping is a justification for serious crime,

1 and in the Nigerian case, religious difference simply serves as a basis for stereotyping and victimization. People who are attacked physically in hate crimes are thought to deserve what they get; attackers do the world a favor by reducing the population of whatever group the victims represent.

Constructed enemies do not deserve either sympathy or respect. When President Shehu Shagari lost seven children in a car accident in the 1980s, a Christian singer celebrated it with joy as "revenge by God." When the Maitatsine rioted in the 1980s, corpses were difficult to identify because the killers had removed their eyes, tongues, noses, and ears.² Mutilation was an expression of deep anger. Misfortunes to Muslim communities, like the flood in the northeast, are interpreted as God's punishment of his enemies. "The punishment of Wukari" has become a sustained wish of Christians, the ultimate gesture of divine support that they hope will be repeated upon all their enemies. The Wukari punishment is widely reported in Christian news magazines to popularize a legitimate request from God.³ The story is similar to some of the experiences of Israel in the Old Testament and how God intervened on its behalf:

Late in 1987 a muslim decided to bulldoze the graves of certain white christian missionaries at Ibi town in the Wukari Local Government Area of

Gongola State of Nigeria to extend his estate. God spoke to a christian to tell the emir of Ibi to warn the man. The emir was reluctant because of his religious leaning. On December 24, the graves were bulldozed.

Immediately, a mysterious invisible fire started operation. The bulldozer was the first victim. The fire selectively burned the properties of several muslims in that town. Only little children could see the spread of the fire to any of its targets. The invisible fire continued until March the following year. By January, the fire had gutted about 400 houses, according to a report by a northern based secular newspaper, *The Reporter*, of January 30, 1988. By March, the number of houses affected had grown to about 3,000. Some muslims who had not been affected and were quick to realise that the fire was selective, went to hide their belongings in the nearby town and villages. But the fire could identify the properties from Ibi and did justice to those properties leaving those of their hosts in the same houses! No christians were affected. But a few christians

who dared sympathise with their muslim friends immediately had a brush of the show. A muslim parent who beat his child for joining some christians in prayer meeting, had his house gutted that very evening.

4

The story ends with the government and its scientists unable to stop the fire until Christians had prayed about it and had used the opportunity to convert over four hundred Muslims to Christianity. The story must not be interpreted as factual no such disaster occurred on this scale but its motives are telling: Christians are to be assured that their God will seek the means to destroy their enemies.

Violence enhances self-esteem: the idea that the enemy has to be disciplined reflects authoritarian tendencies⁵ and the belief that force can be used to make deviants conform. Such expressions of self-described superiority and righteousness emphasize differences and build self-esteem.

Violence is justified as a mission to rid the world of evil by destroying the enemies and their possessions. Outsiders are constructed as evil, capable of destroying insiders' religion, culture, identity, and birth place. The purpose of the mission is to destroy the evil, and the belief behind it is that a higher-order purpose is at stake. Perpetrators present divine revelations or instructions from God to carry out a cleansing mission, to destroy evil as quickly as possible. "God will not forgive you if you fold up your arms," a Christian preacher told his followers in mobilizing them against Muslims.⁶ "We kill for Allah," one Muslim convict asserted without remorse.⁷ The issue of conscience does not arise, which is the very opposite of what religion teaches. In March 1987, a church elder, Kaduzu Shebuka of the ECWA Church in Tudun Wada, Kaduna, was doused with gasoline and set ablaze, burned to death in front of his church. In Kano in 1991, people were burned

alive in their houses, a few were beheaded, and the gut of one pregnant woman was ripped open. In these and other cases, violence shows callousness, brutality, and barbarism.

Violence is often justified as revenge: members of the outside group have sinned, and need to be punished. When the Hausa massacred southern Zairians in 1992, they explained their actions as retaliation for the actions of their victims, who were accused of being the first to kill their own members in Zangon-Kataf. Christians have long justified the burning of mosques as a retaliation for the burnings of their own churches. Revenge becomes an endless cycle in which all parties can claim blamelessness. The belief in retaliation is closely related to that of self-defense; both justifications are tantamount to blaming the victim of violence. And taken to ex-

tremes, the self-defense justification becomes the preemptive strike. In this case, the enemy is at fault for being attacked in retaliation for actions they have not even undertaken. CAN informed the federal government in 1987 that it would fight the Muslims in self-defense:

we will no longer stand by and see ourselves killed and our property destroyed. Since the law and governments have been so incompetent to defend us we will have to defend ourselves.

8

The Muslim Students Society legitimated its killing of Christians as a preemptive strike:

Muslims in this country have no particular hatred to any religion . . . but they have a *mass psychology* which identified some of these religious groups with their present predicament and the frustration of their hopes and aspirations as *Umma* . . . much as burning any place of worship cannot be justified, the real culprits . . . are those who have turned a residence into a church knowing fully well the sensibilities of the people. The real culprits, undoubtedly, are those who invited a Bishop from England a symbol of the Muslims humiliation to lay the foundation stone of the said church. . . . Logically, the only means open to these unfortunate Muslim fellows to maintain their *mental stability* is through such emotional outbursts, against any visible targets of their oppression . . . *cumulative frustration* can breed anything, be it logical or otherwise.⁹

Religious violence is also frequently an expression of frustration with inequalities or perceived marginalization, or even of poverty. Under worsening economic conditions and intense political competition, religious violence becomes an avenue for grievances and challenges to the current politics of resource distribution. In Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s, the economy deteriorated very rapidly, and the quality of life for the majority of the population diminished considerably. Energy can be focused on the enemy without much hesitation. "No

money to eat, no money to pay school fees,"¹⁰ and all sorts of related complaints indicate a daily experience of relative deprivation. Many people talk as if there is no future, as if the present is lost, and as if the country gives them nothing. They look for targets against which to vent their frustration. Those targets are accused of creating economic problems for others, as when the non-natives were targeted in Bauchi in 1991 and Kano in 1991, 1993, and 1995. The understanding of socio-economic history is distorted to support a view wherein people of different ethnicity and religion are responsible for creating economic misfortunes.

Many of those who resort to violence see themselves as victims; rather than put the blame on the state, they shift attention to individuals of a different religion, even when these people lack power.

In such a situation, when people or groups feel that others are destroying them or threatening their rights and privileges, resentment is quite intense. Among many Christians in central and southern Nigeria, there is much talk about the ruination brought upon them by the control of the state by the Muslims.

11 They feel rejected, that they have no control over their destiny, and that they can be destroyed at any time by their rivals. Young people are of the opinion that the system has failed them, and that the blame should fall on someone else. Almost all the Christian groups in central Nigeria believe that the Hausa-Fulani Muslims have cheated them for years, prevent their success now, and will continue this behavior in future.¹² In such a situation, the perceived enemy must be challenged, with violence if necessary.

Northern Muslims are resented by many Christians, who blame them for their own troubles and miseries, even those that they created for themselves. According to the Christians, it is the Muslims who make admissions to the universities difficult, new jobs impossible, and political integration of the country a pipe dream. When decisions are made in faraway Abuja, the federal capital, where a handful of military officers determine the fate of ninety million people, the ordinary Muslims on the streets of Ibadan share in the blame, and they become the target of verbal attacks, resentment, and hatred. The rich and the powerful politicians and the military officers protect themselves with guns and hide behind fortresses, whereas the ordinary Muslims, being nearby and visible, serve as convenient substitute targets.

When a group or its elite thinks that its status, wealth, and power are being challenged or diminished, it instigates violence and mobilizes people in its support. In the north, a tiny Muslim elite that has long had privilege and power says it is being threatened by southerners and Christians who want to take away everything they have. This tiny elite feels it must actively assert its dominance if it is to survive. When a southern elite talks back, it is couched in the context of a threat. On the other hand, the southern political class acts as if two groups, southerners and northerners, are mutually opposed to each other in the fight for control over the nation's scarce resources, and any success of their northern rivals means that they will not attain their own goals. In the 1980s and 1990s, when the diminishment of national resources was being felt across the country, neither side was willing to wait any longer to stake its claim.

For both sides of the north-south political divide, the contest for power has spilled over to the religious domain. The northerners reaffirm their moral worth through their identification as Muslims; this worth can be enhanced and sustained by depicting the opposition in less moralistic terms. Many feel that their rivals' lack of moral worth increases their own, and that others have to be downgraded for them to upgrade themselves. Therefore, a Christian verbal or physical attack on Muslims (or vice versa) makes the Christians feel all the more devout and more committed to their faith. Consequently, violence is described as a jihad by many Muslims, an affirmation of commitment to a just cause. It is the enemy the victim of violence who is guilty, for being morally inferior. JNl, the MSS and the 'ulama have never admitted wrongdoing in any riot they provoked. One standard response, as phrased by a powerful think tank, was this:

Muslims in Nigeria have never initiated a single religious conflict in Nigeria. Even, the so-called "Maitatsine Religious Riots" were carefully planned by non-Muslims to implicate Muslims and ridicule Islam. The Kafanchan riots were initiated by Christians who sponsored Malam Bako from Zaria to Kafanchan for the purpose. What the Muslims have done in the past was to react spontaneously to religious clashes, once initiated.

13

Christians say the same thing, presenting themselves as peace-loving people, victims of demons who worship Islam. When Christians take to violence, it is justified as a reaction. As far as CAN is concerned, Islam is always the errant religion, pushing Christians to the wall. In one widely-circulated book, Christians were admonished to meet combatively the challenges that confronted them:

Many believers have misinterpreted the Bible by saying that if your enemy slaps you on the right cheek, turn to the left also. This is the time for Christians to be alert to the words of God and to put on the whole armour

of God.

I do not say that Christians should burn down mosques, which contain only mats and bottles, compared with cathedrals containing organs, pews, pulpits and other expensive materials. But you should not allow such ugly incidents as the ones which happened in the North to repeat themselves. You must know that God has given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the powers of the enemy. You should no longer turn the left cheek; rather, you should know that you have been given power to cast out devils. All that has been happening is from the devil. You must resist the devil. You are soldiers of Christ. Fight the good fight.¹⁴

The methods and means of violence are as varied as the forms. Many are spontaneous, following a prolonged period of mutual distrust, misgivings, and verbal threats. Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi, and Zangon-Kataf were all spontaneous riots. A few were anticipated, like Yahaya in Katsina or the Maitatsine in Kano.

The heroes of religious activism are the ones who kill, who use aggression to defend their faith, who write hate literature, and who deliver great condemnatory sermons. The killer becomes a role model, which is why it is always easy to get informants to talk about violence. "I alone slaughtered four *Yanmirin*," and "I was the first to set fire at the mosque," statements made almost offhandedly, reflect a sense of satisfaction and courage. Such idols are not shamed by members of their group. On the contrary, they become heroes who can defy the state, damn the police, confront the army, fight for religious belief, defend their own people, and provide leadership. Heroes expect and receive applause: they find nothing wrong with their actions, deny that they have attacked innocent people, and insist that their cause is legitimate. Young people identify with the new heroes as moral authorities in a country where the secular power is already discredited. But the vision of this hero is limited. He is motivated only by hate, revenge, and an ambition to impose a particular belief.

In most cases, violence is carried out by a mob or a group who move around, committing vandalism, beatings, and destruction. The 1987 violence in Zaria was conducted mob-style one particularly gruesome example was the group that attacked Dr. Ben Oruma, chaplain at the Kongo Campus of the Ahmadu Bello University; they went to his house and, when he fled, chased after him for almost a mile. When he was overpowered, the mob descended upon him with knives, stabbing, slashing, and bludgeoning his body. When they were satisfied that he was dead, his assailants left him, chanting *Allahu akbar*, *Allahu akbar* (Allah is most great, Allah is most great). Oruma figured they were

thanking God for delivering an enemy, himself, unto them.

15

Mobs and groups have greater access than do individuals to resources supplied by people and organizations who provide slogans, money, mottoes, and guidance. There are external influences and global connections as well. The Ayatollah Khomeini promoted the Shiite faith in Nigeria. Khomeini justified the jihad and the use of violence to attain it.¹⁶ To further the cause, Iran supplied literature, money, and ideas to Shiite organizations in Nigeria. Libya assisted the *Izala* in its anti-Sufi campaigns. Christian organizations receive support from the West in the form of tracts, Bibles, and money.

Groups have many advantages for their members. Ambitious people can move up in the group and learn leadership and manipulation skills. Groups offer protection and security, as it is difficult to arrest a single person and hold him responsible for a collective act of violence. With a mob, violence is fast and effective, because a division of labor is possible: one person buys fuel, another carries it to a target, another spreads it around, another lights the fire, and another fans the flame. These small activities quickly add up to great calamities.

In all the major cases of violence, there is substantial evidence of thrill-seeking: hate crimes are often accompanied by excitement, and psychologically speaking, they perhaps fulfill destructive proclivities. Violence brings an opportunity to push personal freedom to the limit, and there is usually ample time to cause trouble. Destruction comes with jubilation, shouts of joy, and victory songs.

The sight, presence, and symbols of the enemy are all objects of attack. A person need not have constituted any visible threat or have done anything to warrant attack other than to belong to the enemy group. Neither the elderly nor children were spared in Zangon-Kataf and Tafawa Balewa. Even goats and chickens were killed in Zangon-Kataf, not because the people harbored particular hatred for animals, but because they hated those who owned them.

The state's strategy in dealing with religious problems is to act out of self-interest whenever possible. In general, except in few instances, incidents of public violence are allowed to run their course, with the army moving in only after much of the possible destruction has already occurred. Local resources are almost always inadequate to end major conflict, and federal power is the most decisive, but intervention is always undertaken after a crisis; that is, the state's strategy is reactive. Because the state has more resources than the organizers of protest, it has always been very successful in using force

to end violence. Protesters flee and go into hiding. While meeting force with force is the most common response, it is not the only possible strategy. The state has periodically shown passivity or nonchalance in intra-religious conflicts, leaving the combatants to solve their own problems. The state has failed woefully to develop a preemptive strategy that will anticipate and prevent violence before it explodes.

A sense of accomplishment and satisfaction always accompanied the end of violence. Since participants have come to realize that the army and the police are slow to mobilize, they hurry to finish and then withdraw, saying they had taught the enemy a lesson, bragging about the death toll, and otherwise indicating satisfaction with their performance.

17 In addition

to killing the enemy, enemy symbols are destroyed mosques, churches, offices, and vehicles. Booty consists of foodstuffs, clothes, spare parts, or any other goods the looters want but cannot afford. Violence confers bragging rights, and perpetrators use the language of dominance and aggression. Violence, too, allows the assertion of authority, one that the secular powers have denied the majority of the Nigerian population. Yahaya, for instance, told his followers that Madaki had no control over them, and Marwa refused to honor the invitation of Governor Rimi of Kano.

Minority elements always suffer the most. Their small numbers usually prevent them from winning no matter how courageously they fight. They are forced to take refuge in barracks and other safe places. If there is an opportunity to escape, many flee to nearby towns where they have relatives, or if they are non-natives, to their states of origin. There are cases of mass migrations from danger zones. Those who remain behind live in fear, threatened by the promise of continued violence. They are forced to accept their inferior status, limit their movements, choose their friends carefully, and conduct business dealings with caution and diplomacy.

No case of religious violence has led to the collapse of any federal or regional governments, as threatening as they all have been. In the case of Zangon-Kataf in 1992, the local government council was disbanded, but it was more a punitive measure by the state governor than anything else. And most of the original causes of violence remain, indicating that the grievances that inspired the instigators are yet to be addressed, and that more troubles lie ahead. No reforms have been initiated in Nigeria; no lasting positive changes have been brought, despite massive protest, pandemic violence, and even a full-scale rebellion in the 1960s. Religious violence has not been in vain: each incident further consolidates identity, and groups are made stronger and better able to prepare for further conflict.

Nigeria in Comparative Perspective: Difficulties and Challenges

I will now locate Nigeria in two comparative contexts as a way to indicate the kind of difficulties and challenges that the country faces.

The first of these will be a comparison with those countries mentioned in the introduction to this book, countries in which religious crisis has been rampant. The second context shows the continuity of conflicts in countries more economically and politically advanced than Nigeria.

It is hardly unique to Nigeria that religion is important and caught

up with politics.

18 Religious leaders are powerful in Vatican City and in Vanuatu, which has a 94% Christian population, or in Senegal, where the marabout influence politics. Most of the attempts to check the growth of religion or curb the influence of religious leaders have ended in one kind of trouble or another. Notable examples are such former Communist countries as Vietnam, South Yemen, Yugoslavia, Albania, and Mongolia. China also tried in vain, and there has been a religious resurgence since 1967. Wherever one particular religion is dominant, it ends up influencing politics in its own way, as in the case of Islam in such diverse places as Mauritania, Guinea, Morocco, Senegal, Syria, Western Sahara, and Maldives; Christianity in Western Samoa, Swaziland, Zambia, Turks and Caicos Islands, St. Helena, Tonga, Malta, Sao Tome, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic; and Confucianism and Buddhism in Korea. Where there are two or more religions, or a number of sects within one dominant religion, religion can become a divisive force. Dominant religions aspire to curb the demands by minorities and tend to insist that the state be organized on the basis of its own values.

The nature of conflict differs from place to place, but a distinct pattern emerges in most cases. In some places, it is the reform-minded mobilization of religion against the state, as in the case of the Catholic Church in Zaire, where the government of Mobutu Sese Seko was consistently condemned; in Kenya, where the church has become the most viable opposition to an authoritarian government; in Liberia, where the Catholics criticized the Doe regime; in Mozambique, where the Catholics collided with the state; or in Algeria, where Muslim leaders demand reform. In other places, religious issues can be resolved by violence. Opposition to government policies by religious

groups is fairly common and can be seen in most countries of the world. Opposition can be conservative, but it is usually more radical, as in the case of Islamic militant groups in Iran, Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Conflicts can be between two competing groups, as in the case of Nigeria or Mauritius, where the Hindu ethnic/religious community clashes with the Roman Catholics in particular and Christians in general.

For countries in which two or more dominant religions coexist, tensions tend to revolve around the propagation of faith. If one faith is dominant by the numbers, as in most North African countries, the minority religion plays the politics of survival, and its members can either be politically passive or recognize the futility of injecting religion into politics. The trouble is that where two or more religions are assertive, or where one is unable to dominate politically, they tend to be relatively equal in number

and power. Attempts at achieving religious homogeneity as a political strategy has generated enormous crisis, as happened in Sudan when its leaders attempted to spread Islam and impose a theocratic state. In Sudan, the civil war continues, and all the attempts to resort to Islamic law as a homogenizing strategy alienate the southerners. Al-Shari'a became not a source of unity, but of division, and the idea that legal equality could bring about change quickly turned out to be false, as southerners found al-Shari'a very repugnant. Both secular and Islamic governments have failed in Sudan, partly because of the way in which they have been defined, and partly because a dominant political class has attempted to achieve hegemony without first having either legitimacy or credibility.

In Asia, there is as yet no end to violence in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, perhaps because identities and communal nationalism remain intense. The demand for self-determination remains very strong, and communal pressures on the state are enormous. In the case of South Asia, as in Nigeria, the root of the violence has been traced to European colonial politics that politicized ethnic relations, and to the failure of successive independent countries to devise appropriate measures for minimizing communal politics. The solutions, similar to Nigeria's, include the use of state power to enforce coexistence and build a new nation-state, and also to promote economic development.

19 State power brought encroachment on people's freedoms, the emergence of a political class that uses its power arbitrarily, and other complications. Although there was an initial period of success in the 1950s and 1960s, resistance by different religious and communal identities followed, and the state has had to resort to violence to prevent secession. Each country resorts to different strategies to construct nations out of different ethnicities. In India, the state has

reformed aspects of the Hindu religion (such as eliminating the caste system), taken to multiparty democracy, and used force when it is necessary. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the strategy has been to use a unitary system to ensure the survival of the component units.

The nation-state project has not succeeded in solving the problems between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority in India and similar Asian countries, but it has prevented the country's collapse. Successes have been recorded, for instance, in the area of democracy. While the Hindu now accept democracy and the secular state, they seem to reject measures that would grant too many rights to the Muslim minority. Indian democracy has not succeeded in completely entrenching its values among the general populace, nor has it been able to overcome religious and ethnic differences. Poverty and social inequality, as in the case of Nigeria, combine

to create conditions for trouble. What may be even worse is that the Indian secular arrangement has failed to integrate the Muslims. "Thus far," argues Ishtiaq Ahmed, "the Muslims have been treated in Indian politics either as unfortunate cultural group deserving the sympathy and protection of the secular state . . . or as a despised and disloyal one fit to be relegated to an even more excluded and marginal position."

20 This will explain, for instance, the intractable problem of Kashmir Islamic nationalism, demanding a separate state of their own, although the Indian political class will argue that the Muslims enjoy considerable autonomy and self-governance.²¹ The demand of Hindu fundamentalists to redefine the basis of secularism is one of the challenges that India faces in resolving its communal crisis, but it has certainly made progress in unleashing secular and democratic forces far better than what passes for civil government in Nigeria.

The unitary state system of Bangladesh has been successful in keeping a homogeneous state together, but has yet to clearly define its own model of Islamic democracy or to prevent the recent mass migration of the minority Hindu to India. In Pakistan, a nation where Islam is dominant, problems include the integration the of women and women's rights into the political system without offending conservative Islamic leaders, and how to develop a democracy and an economic system that is sensitive to the poor and to the interest of religious minorities, who constitute about three per cent of the population.

One last example from Asia is the case of China, with its minority Muslim population in the Western frontier of Xinjiang. The Chinese government has accused the Muslims of seeking separation, and of using terrorism to accomplish it. The Muslims want a greater share in

the resources of their region, including oil, more religious freedom, and an end to nuclear testing at the region's Lop Nor site. They have taken to violence to express their demands, targeting officials and anti-Islamic religious leaders. The response of the Chinese government is predictable: it has forcibly suppressed these demands, and thousands of Muslims have been arrested. It is unlikely that the Muslim minorities will be able to obtain what they want. With only 1.46% of the total population, they simply do not have the numbers to assert themselves in the most populous country on earth. One option for the anti-government nationalists is to migrate to other Islamic countries in the region or to reconcile themselves as a marginal people. The Muslims in Sri Lanka may have to do the same as their Chinese counterparts, although they appear to be in an even weaker position.

The Nigerian situation may also be usefully compared to that of some democratic nations, as it does not follow that an end to military rule in

Nigeria and the establishment of a viable democracy would mean that religious groups would stop making serious demands on the state, much less that they would end the competition and conflicts with one another. Democratic regimes the world over continue to experience political problems and violence. Some regimes are capable of absorbing the problems and limiting the dangers to their institutions. Other societies have experienced far-reaching revolutionary pressures that reshape the nature of politics or even generate the collapse of states. The issues that generate violence in other countries or that make religious violence difficult to resolve can be found in Nigeria, and would continue to be found there even in the event it improves its politics and its economy. Almost everywhere, certain groups use violence to make claims or to protest. In seeking to protect its institutions or the interest of the political class, the state uses force to deal with such groups.

Building political consensus over a number of pressing issues has caused a great deal of tensions in many countries. Middle Eastern countries, for instance, have been faced with the problem of how to relate with one another to negotiate peace and security, promoting the emergence of many groups with vastly contrasting opinions. Israel is a developed country, but it is as politically fractured as Nigeria.

The extent to which minority rights should be protected has caused many problems in many countries, in spite of their development, as the case of the United States demonstrates. While the constitution of the United States strives to prevent the majority from denying the rights of minorities, in practice, women, blacks, and gays and lesbians, to name a few, have had cause to become violent in demanding their rights. In the last twenty years, these groups have recorded significant successes. Still, the country remains a violent one, but without any serious threat of breakup or of a breakdown of government authority.

22 Religion remains an important force in United States politics. Controversies are constantly generated on a wide range of issues, but the acceptance of the legitimacy of the secular state has been an effective regulator of conflicts. Such divisive controversies ultimately get resolved by secular institutions such as the Congress and the Supreme Court.

Democracy and the constitution are one thing, but the ambitions of a political class is another. The Nigerian political class is not the only one that uses power to advance its interests. Politics in developed societies also show a clear tendency for those in power to benefit themselves and their supporters, sometimes in ways that hurt others severely enough to create unrest. Within any country, there are groups who believe that they are being cheated, and who make vigorous demands or even demand secession, as the Quebecois have done in Canada. While the secular option

remains the most important in modern history, it has yet to guarantee long-term peace or ensure the end of religious rivalries and conflicts.

Contested Values and the Future of Nigerian Nationhood

The origins and typologies of religious violence in Nigeria reveal a pattern that makes it possible to conclude that the problems described in this book will remain entrenched for a long time. As I hope I have demonstrated, most cases of religious violence have been instigated by religious communities and focused on religious cleavages, suggesting a high level of commitment and a great degree of consensus in using violence as a strategy. In addition to making the regional characterization that I have attempted, I want also to examine the cleavages a bit further and show that there are multiple and contested values, images, and ideas that will continue to generate conflicts. Some groups seek to dominate, while others play the part of the resistance. Social and political relationships are not constructed on the basis of consensus, but on differences. No cleavage, not even the state governed by the military, has succeeded in making uncontested claims to the control of Nigeria; nor is there even a consensus on the definition of nationhood. Dictatorship, political oppression, oppositional nationalism, and tension define the country's history, as every cleavage attempts to define Nigeria. The important cleavages are as follows:

Marginalized and Defensive Groups.

Ethnic minorities in the north, mainly in central Nigeria, such as the Seyawa of Bauchi State or the Zangon-Kataf of Kaduna state.

Christian Minorities.

In general, Christians in the north constitute a minority, both in the way they define themselves and also because of the dominance of

Islam. They believe that their rights and existence are being denied by the Muslims. Not only would they continue to fight, they are likely to escalate vigilantism in the country, as they seek the means to protect themselves and to pursue their rights in aggressive ways.

Islamic Majority.

They believe that the government is appeasing Christian minorities at Muslim expense, and that very little is being done to reflect the dominance of Islam in the governance of the country. They will continue to defend Islam, and to seek to limit the privileges enjoyed by the Christians.

Southern Christian Intelligentsia.

They think that the north prevents them from gaining federal power and limits their economic potential.

Northern Muslim Intelligentsia.

They seem to want to develop the political status quo, that is the control of federal power by northern Muslims. When they perceive that their interests are at stake or that the southern intelligentsia is uniting, they react very strongly to prevent what they conclude to be a calculated attempt to destroy them.

Intra-Religious Groups.

These are competing sects within both religions, each sect trying to define the religion in its own way.

Reformist Groups.

These are religious people who demand a revolution of some sort, drawing their vision from religion. They are many and disunited. Some are opposed to technological or Western changes; some complain that social changes are destructive of religion. There are those who reject secular authority. All reformist groups want to transform Nigeria, but only within the strictures of their own vision. Reformist groups can be conservative or radical, but they are powerful advocacy groups. A number of Islamic reformist groups like the Shiites believe in the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Reformist groups tend to be large and well-focused, and are often organized around a charismatic leader. They are joined in conflicts by large numbers of nonmembers who join up for a variety of reasons.

State Establishment.

Those who control power, acting in the interests of the state and of a

tiny political elite, will continue to use violence to maintain hegemony. The state controls the means of violence, which it has used to threaten and pressure the people to behave the way it wants. By and large, the coercive power of the state has been unable to prevent violence, either because its intelligence service cannot anticipate it, or because it wants to use the violence as an excuse to stay in power. The state has also denied many of the grievances, preferring instead to attribute violence to "irrational elements in society."

A number of characteristics can be discerned from these cleavages. For one thing, it is important to note that the groups identified above are fairly permanent, and most have a fairly old history in Nigeria. The leadership of the groups may be ephemeral, and followers may be scattered at times, but the idea of each group can remain effective in keeping the groups alive. The groups have genuine grievances, and members can be bitter.

Such cases of violence promoted by the desire of groups to free themselves of domination can be solved with better political management. Minorities defined by boundaries and territories (e.g., the Zangon-Kataf) cannot relocate or take to flight for long durations, which leaves them only with the option of resistance. They will continue to resist, to use religion to solidify identities and organize conflicts, unless their grievances are addressed.

The north is the most troubled region in the country. It is there that Islam asserts itself the most, and where Christians and minority ethnic groups seek reforms to empower and liberate them from what they regard as an Islamic domination. Given the sharp differences within the region, Islam tends to dominate the discussion of religious violence in the country. What is more, even in the north-south confrontation for control of federal power, Islam gets factored into the dynamicsthe north uses Islam for political legitimization, consolidation, and getting votes. It can be profitably argued that the role of Islam in violence is a large one, perhaps more predominant than that of Christianity, if we also count the conflicts that spring up among the various Islamic groups. More lives have been lost in the north, and Christians would appear to have suffered the most in the violence because they were outnumbered and overpowered. Such attacks on southerners as those that occurred in Kano and Bauchi further raise the stakes, as well as encouraging the Christian perception that Islam is either a violent religion or tolerates the use of force.

These social cleavages make it difficult for principled political movements to emerge. In those circumstances in which political parties have managed to cut across religious and ethnic lines, as the NPN did, the major purpose is not consensus-building, but to establish avenues to share political offices in order to steal public resources.

What are the implications of the competition among the various groups and of the variety of opinions they generate? The first is the escalation of conflicts; this is the trend of the moment because there has not been any serious attempt at addressing the root causes. The continuation of conflicts will further damage intergroup and Muslim-Christian relations, and will widen the north-south divide. There are other scenarios as well. Groups will continue to talk of secession, as the Igbo tried to do unsuccessfully in the 1960s, and the Yoruba advocated in the 1990s. Religious and ethnic rivalries will always raise controversial comments on the future of the country and ceaseless demands for the renegotiation of the basis of Nigeria's federation. Some demands and the nationalism generated by them may wither, as the issues are addressed, but some will continue to linger because they are difficult problems.

In the preceding chapters, I have examined all the various options that are on the table and had to dismiss them as either unrealistic or unworkable. It seems that the option that will dominate for now is the increasing use of violence by the state to suppress dissent. State violence has proven effective in forcing people to take to flight, or it can even unleash genocidal force, as happened in Rwanda and Liberia. However, the extent to which the state can continue to use force is dependent on a number of factors. The point at which the people will become angry and challenge the state may come; and since groups know that the state can use violence, it is not unlikely that protest strategies can be revised to handle the police and the army. In some other settings, as in the United States and Latin America, opposition forces have had to apply greater force to fight the state. The political class itself can become divided and fractionalized to a point at which it lacks the capacity to control the police and the army.

If religious groups are unable to confront state violence, victory for the state is not necessarily guaranteed. As current cases have demonstrated, groups resort to alternative strategies for dealing with the state. One is a distancing strategy, in which groups try to avoid the state altogether, which explains the popularity of the choice of migrations outside of the country. Yet another is to withdraw any commitment or loyalty to the state, which is also happening in Nigeria. Many people say that they are not Nigerians, a statement that indicates not just a lack of nationalism, but deep alienation. The power of the state to arbitrate conflicts becomes severely limited in a situation where only coercive power is deployed. The ruling class will be unable to generate trust, and its mediatory role becomes ineffective. The Babangida regime reached this point when it lost the trust of Christians and several Islamic groups.

Another option that cannot be ruled out is the strategy of imposing a national religion on the country, as they did in Sudan. As I said in the

last chapter, this strategy has been discussed since the 1950s, usually with a plan to Islamize the entire north first and possibly moving southwards thereafter. The advocates are aware that the power of the state and the use of force are necessary to accomplish this. But given the high number of Christians, this will only be possible if force is overwhelming enough to ensure massive surrender. This is most unlikely to happen, as the use of force at this scale will involve genocide and attract international attention. Domestic hostilities will escalate, factions of the military and the police are likely to rebel, and the state may ultimately collapse.

Experience in Nigeria and other countries has indicated the expedience of state-imposed force for ensuring law and order. However, once

force becomes the only option in resolving conflicts, it has to be used repeatedly without end. Nigeria has reached this point, but with another dangerous consequence. Many groups believe that the use of this force is unjustified and illegitimate, meaning of course that they are still aggrieved and will seize on any opportunity to fight back.

That most groups still prepare for a fight or for vigilantism indicates the failure of the Nigerian state to take appropriate remedial strategies to solve the problems of religious violence or the deep-rooted grievances that encourage them. Thus far, the only mediatory action the federal government has taken has been the manipulation of religious leaders into appealing to their members for tolerance or placating aggrieved people by awarding small compensations to repair their damaged property.

Satisfying all the religious interest groups enough to prevent them from making conflicts a routine will require measures for dealing with their grievances. Certain religious demands can be made and addressed without resorting to violence. However, this would require that Nigeria establish a democratic culture that can respond to these demands as they arise, and that can resolve them. The conflicts among members of the same religion may have no permanent solution. Such conflicts over the interpretations of doctrines, leadership struggles, strategies of operation, or government relations will stay with Nigeria forever. In most cases, the religious groups resolve their differences through permanent divisions, as each new faction creates its own autonomy and leadership structure. The state is usually acquiescent, doing little or nothing, not wanting to get involved. When the conflicts take the form of public violence, the local police handle it too little and too late.

The cases of interreligious conflicts (as between Muslims and Christians) or the use of religious violence to underscore grievances of

a sociopolitical nature are much more complicated and threatening to Nigeria's survival. It is these two forms of conflict that dominate the final analysis I offer in this book. Such causes of conflict like the Christian perception that the Islamic intelligentsia wants to control the state may be difficult to resolve without further violence. If we add the problems of ethnicity, increasing poverty, and reckless competition for power to the religious problems already discussed, it may well be that Nigeria may not survive the pressure of contested images and values, or that the resolution of conflicts will take the form of routine state violence. Is there a way out of either the collapse of Nigeria or the regular and permanent use of force? Any answer to this important question must indicate how the country can build social capital, rebuild its social fabric, and settle deep-seated grievances that lead

to violence. The following closing remarks are based on an assumption that religious communities can coexist and that Nigeria does not have to end up breaking apart.

Nation-Building: Towards an Ultimate Strategy

Given the difficult nature of Nigeria's problems, especially the protracted nature of conflicts in a society divided by religion, if the crisis is not to lead to the collapse of the state or the eventual breakup of the country, the management of politics and the economy must change dramatically. As the chapters above have demonstrated, religious violence and aggression involve more than religious beliefs; they also include the interplay of political, economic, and ethnic forces. Therefore, any attempt to seek solutions to violence or even to intellectualize it must move beyond the sermons on love and tolerance, the search for correct ethics and common ground among the different religions, or the rather simplistic manipulation of flags and anthems to construct a so-called civil religion as the project of the nation-state.

The links between religious violence and the Nigerian economy and state are so firmly established that many answers have to be sought in those connections. That religious violence and aggression will slow down the pace of economic progress is already clear. In places where riots have occurred, or in places with the potential for violence and aggression, labor has tended to move away temporarily or to seek refuge outside of the country. In the 1980 riots, most of the participants were poor, and religion was used to express protest. Other riots reflected the concern of the poor for the economic mismanagement of the country, the widening gap between rich and poor, and wide-ranging deprivations. The downturn in the economy has drastically reduced the resources available to the state to cater to the poor in order to assuage their feelings. If there is indeed an

economic dimension to the problem, we have to broaden our understanding of the Nigerian crisis to the wider spectrum of underdevelopment.

Also, if we accept, in the final analysis, that politics is important, that religion itself is often presented as political, or that the politicization of religion in Nigeria is inevitable, can the Nigerian state be thinking about the form and character of "politicized religions" whose interests can be accommodated to those of the state itself? Or should the state relentlessly pursue the means to seek non-religious based policies that will minimize tension and violence? There is certainly a role for leadership.

23 Can an acceptable national leadership emerge in an atmosphere of deep mistrust?

Should the state broaden its leadership recruitment to include traditional chiefs and religious leaders, both of whom are excluded by secular constitutions, and use them to govern in a way that will appeal to the majority of the population? These and other questions compel me to address the larger theme of nation-building and some of the issues that impinge upon religious violence.

In seeking answers to the problems posed by religion, the ultimate end is to have an integrated, cohesive Nigeria, rather than an agglomeration of nations and groups with loosely defined relations to one another. The liability of past history has not been overcome. To begin with, the artificiality of the political boundaries, a product of the European partition, is a constant reminder that Nigerians were never asked if they wanted to live in the same country. The civil war of the 1960s is evidence of deep hostility and interethnic rivalries.

One starting point is to recognize the weakness of intergroup relations in Nigeria. The belief in the 1960s and 1970s was that lack of interaction among people of different ethnic and religious groups was responsible for the country's problems of instability and tension. As Nigerians interacted and traveled, it was thought, so too would they learn to tolerate and live in harmony. Rather than recycle old stereotypes, intergroup relations would enable first-hand knowledge of one another and a positive assessment of the country. Influenced by this belief, the government took such steps as the creation of additional states, the formation of broad-based political parties, the establishment of unity schools for teenagers, and the National Youth Service for college graduates.

24

In spite of all these facts, the problems remain. Intergroup relations are more complicated than the government had assumed. As it turned

out, some of their policies promoted resentment for one another. Words that suggest that indigenes and non-natives despise one another are commonly used. Very clearly, the elite fails to mix well with the poor, and people express their differences much more openly and argue that they have little to do with one another. Migrants become threats to their hosts (as when southerners were accused of taking jobs that should have gone to northerners, or when southerners accused northerners of not allowing them to be promoted in the federal civil service as rapidly as they would have wished), which encouraged confrontations. The groups do not have a common strategy for unity, a condition necessary for nationalism, harmony and peace.²⁵

The dominant socialization process and values in Nigeria are not sufficiently integrative, and are too much influenced by one group's negative stereotypes about the others. Stereotyped images of differences fuel tension

and conflicts. Moreover, understanding and compassion for others are usually limited to members of the same group or religion. In other words, the concern of the individual is for the plight of those with whom he or she shares a similar interest or identity. Nigerian problems are not always treated as universal, but as specific to a group.

There is as yet no consensus as to what the role of religion should be in politics. While many want a separation, many others want religion to be at the center of politics. When queried as to what can be done to minimize tension among different religious groups, one of the very few radical women in the north, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, gave a short reply:

What I want is the removal of religion from politics. No Christian can form a government without Muslims and no Muslim can form a government without Christians.

26

This linkage between politics and religion is an important one because there is no stable and democratic government. The Nigerian state has been careless in defining its relationship to religion as the leaders show their preference in public speeches and policies. The constitution endorses no state religion, but political actors usually identify with one religion or another. The inconsistency among the leading political actors tends to add to the problem of arriving at a consensus on how the state should treat religion. Some argue that the country should not have "an official religion," and the state should be in a position to curb the excesses of religious groups. Some argue otherwise, suggesting the adoption of both Islam and Christianity as the country's official religions. A minority element proposes that the violence should continue in the hope that the state itself will collapse,

and a new process of rebuilding will follow. There has not been much theorizing along this anarchic line.

The most common opinion is that the state should not promote any "official religion" for the country. But since the majority of the population is religious, the state has to work out how to promote the people's interests and contribute to all religious bodies without generating tension. The parameters of the relationship between the state and religion have to be spelled out more clearly so that it can be clear when rules are violated. Political leaders have to work for all citizens, not just for their own people, in order to generate trust and minimize interreligious tensions. To date, the political class and the military have shown no respect for the constitution. Not only are the provisions on religion violated, but the military regime has repeatedly failed to guarantee human rights. Military leaders, in the quest

to build legitimacy, give undue attention to one religion. In addition, the state finances religious activities in a way that leads to suspicion. The failure of political leadership has encouraged religious leaders to play a variety of roles, including the role of instigator.

Even if Nigeria were to find answers to the problems of creating a nation-state, it is still an illusion to think that cohesion will be built on common values and beliefs. There will always be tension based on different ideas, ideologies, and beliefs. Whether such tension will create large-scale violence may then depend on the extent to which the state can manage it. Even if religion remains the primary architect of the social system, it will not be the only one. Secularization will remain, but it will not obliterate the identity fostered by religion. As the economy further develops, market relations will assume a greater importance.

One sound option for managing tensions and competing values is to adopt a pluralistic cultural and political strategy. The state and individuals within it should not aim at any conversion strategy to win everybody over to the same faith. Religious organizations have to move to a difficult stage of collaboration in order to discuss the type of society they want. From field data, it is obvious that there are contestations over social and moral values. "The problem of Nigeria is not religion, but excessive love of money," declared an informant. Yet another person said that "with corruption so pervasive, there can be no peace or justice." These and other statements may reflect personal beliefs, but they are also statements about the type of society that individuals want to live in.

There can be no single moral standard in Nigeria, as much as many would like to advance one. A number of religious leaders appear to ignore the conflicting moral values in a pluralistic setting such as Nigeria. Some also want a return to a monistic

27 concept of morality in which decisions are based on the received conventions of the past. If modern Nigeria is an agglomeration of different ethnic groups and religions, sources of morality have to be diverse enough to include not just ideas drawn from one religion or ethnic group but from all religions and groups. As part of an international community, the potential sources of morality are further expanded by external contacts. New issues that were never dealt with in the past will always arise and will demand innovative answers, drawn not necessarily from previous beliefs, but from the understanding of current pressures.

Pluralism as a concept has acquired different meanings,²⁸ but it is used here as a device to minimize discrimination in emerging nation-states comprised of people of different religions and ethnicities.²⁹ It relates to the promotion of harmony in a political community with divergent values and

orientations. Divergence is assumed, but the state must evolve the ideology and supporting institutions that will ensure the survival of its territories, promote the unity of its component members, and encourage a healthy dialogue among people and groups.

Certain communicative and interactive conditions are unavoidable. Those in power must know that they cannot destroy the beliefs and ideas of individuals and their groups. Nor must they create the impression that they favor one religion over another. To this extent, the constitutional provisions of religious freedom and the prohibition of the state from adopting any religion "as state religion" must be affirmed. The individuals must also realize that the citizenship of a greater Nigeria is more important than that of a partitioned country. Thus, a relationship of respect and need must be established between the state and its people. Various religious organizations also have to relate in such a way that their competition will not negate the primary objectives of the state that unites them.

The state must promote ideas of equality among individuals, irrespective of their beliefs and ethnicity. The people must think and believe that they can co-exist almost everywhere and that the state is powerful enough to offer protection in case of trouble. The individuals and the state must recognize that the creation of a stable political community involves the acceptance and use of a variety of divergent ideas drawn from all ethnic groups and religions. Any one belief or insight drawn from a specific religion or group may cause suspicion. It is difficult to draw wisdom from many sources if certain groups and individuals are not respected, or if only a minority elite or a dominant group exercises power constantly. A long-standing policy of divisiveness, based on the conviction that an idea, belief, or religion has to be vanquished so that a dominant one can create a hegemony, must be abandoned precisely because it has not worked and it has generated more problems. Instead, all groups and individuals should

be encouraged to subscribe to a set of some "universal" norms such as the constitution, nationalism, public order, human rights, and democracy. Religious beliefs must be treated as "alternative" values that will not be imposed by the state as "universal," since they will invariably favor certain groups at the expense of others. If elements of any religion are found useful, they must be carefully presented so as not to alter any existing equilibrium or be legislated by coercion.

The Nigerian record on human rights is a poor one. Individuals and groups deserve protection, and a culture of individual protection must evolve. The minorities believe that they are exploited, and the poor are victimized. These are realities, not just perceptions, and policies have to be pursued to

correct major imbalances. Since the 1970s, the Nigerian constitution has included pledges to promote equality and human rights, but these have largely been ignored. Legislation must be enacted and used against hate crimes. Offenders should be punished, and murderers and criminals put away to prevent them from seeking other victims. Vulnerable groups have to be protected. Police work in Nigeria is shoddy and too corrupt, but justice requires the reform of the police system itself to sensitize it to dealing with violence.

Poverty is a source of many problems, including religious ones. The gap between rich and poor has to be bridged, and inequality between ethnic groups and areas has to be addressed. Economic grievances by the minorities must be settled. The cure is a people-oriented development strategy that will empower all citizens, allow them to lead a creative and useful life as they define it, and enable them to pursue their beliefs within the confines of established regulations and a stable political system.

My suggestions may not be easy or even visible in the present circumstances of political authoritarianism and economic disintegration. The discussion of the panacea for change and the eradication of religious violence is a vast project, and the elaboration of the democratic alternatives and economic choices that Nigeria has to make may be beyond my capacity. The starting point to solving religious crisis is for Nigerians to struggle for the emergence of active, committed and principled political organizations and leadership to move the country forward. No one should maintain illusions about the magnitude of this effort, since it will involve a profound, indeed revolutionary restructuring of politics, cultures and values. As the case of advanced democracies demonstrate, there will always be issues that will continue to divide, but mechanisms and institutions must be in place to resolve problems. In the case of Nigeria, with its two assertive religions and competing ethnicities, issues of personal law,

customs, political institutions, education, and others will always generate divisive politics and tension. What can prevent the tension from degenerating to prolonged violence and the breakup of Nigeria is better political and economic management by a patriotic political class genuinely committed to change and the construction of a nation-state that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of a multireligious, multiethnic society.

Appendix Statistics

A Note on Statistics; Population Figures

Certain aspects of this study require statistical documentation or comments based on statistics. Some relate to the number of dead or injured people, damaged property, migrations, and other results of religious violence. The most important figures relate to the census on religious composition and the distribution in the country. These are official statistics, which are always manipulated in Nigeria for political and economic purposes. The allocation of federal resources partly depends on the basis of population figures. This has encouraged deliberate inflation, even at the highest level of government.

Southerners complain that they are undercounted or that the north has exaggerated its population figures to ensure political domination. Since the 1980s, there are also complaints by the northern Christian minorities that their number is more than the figures provided by either the government or Islamic organizations.

Certain statistics are resolvable, and intelligent estimates are possible. In all cases where I make references to casualties in religious violence, I have used conservative estimates so as not to draw exaggerated implications from the data. I have relied on different sets of documentation: the official records and those supplied by rival religious communities. The picture is most accurate with respect to burned mosques and churches, because these can be seen directly. Interested parties might contest financial estimates of damaged or burned property, however.

The most difficult problem to resolve is the determination of how many Muslims and Christians are in Nigeria. Until now, no accurate

census of the Nigerian population exists. There have been major censuses, two of which were annulled. Up until 1991, population figures were projected

on the basis of the 1963 census, assuming an annual growth rate between 2.5% and 3.5%. These projections put the country's population at over 120 million, although the official figure in 1991 put it at 89 million (see Table 11).

While I use official figures in the study, I acknowledge that representatives of both Islam and Christianity have disagreed with them. According to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the number of Muslims does not exceed the number of Christians in the country. It concedes that Muslims are predominant only in three northern states (Katsina, Kano, and Sokoto), but nowhere else in the region. It claims that Benue, Plateau, Gongola, Kaduna, Kwara, and Bauchi are predominantly Christian. Niger and Benue are said to be evenly divided among Muslims and Christians, and that the south is predominantly Christian.

¹ The figures produced by the Muslims, however, are much different. They have consistently claimed they outnumber Christians on the whole. Some pro-Islamic figures put Muslims at seventy percent of the population and Christians at less than twenty percent.² Islamic organizations outside of the country, such as the notable Organization of the Islamic Conference, tend to assume that Nigeria is approximately one-half Muslim and one-third Christian in justifying their unilateral description of the country as Islamic.³ Other than to take note of the politics of these exaggerated numbers, I have not used them as data.

Projections derived from the official 1963 census (Tables 6 and 7) have always put the number of Muslims at slightly more than one-half. Estimates and projections since the turn of the century have concluded that Islam spread more effectively than Christianity in the north, spread slowly in central Nigeria, and spread very well in the

western region. For the post-independence period, the projection is that Islam has increased by forty-two percent over a twenty-year period.⁴ On the other hand, Christianity has spread remarkably well in the south, especially in the southeast, and has recorded phenomenal success in penetrating many parts central Nigeria.

The official figures tell the following story: The north makes up over three-quarters of the country in area and has more Muslims than does the south; the earliest figures put the Muslim population in the north at over seventy percent. Christianity is concentrated in the south. There is a minority Christian population among the Hausa and Fulani. Christians are widespread in central Nigeria (also known as the Middle Belt), where minority ethnic groups (called pagans in Islamic records) are concentrated. Both religions have been growing in this area, with Christianity showing

greater strength. Muslims make up half of the Yoruba in the southwest, where Islam has grown at a faster pace (Tables 1, 6, 7, and 9), and Christians predominate in the east. All censuses agree that the north is more populous than the south, with the implication being that there are nationally more Muslims than Christians. In 1952, Muslims outnumbered Christians by 3.26 million; in 1962, by just 0.57 million; in 1963, by 2.58 million; in 1973, by 23 million; and in 1991, by 5.6 million. It is difficult to account for this wide variation, but Christians and southern politicians argue that it is nothing but deliberate government mendacity. The annulled 1973 census has Muslims predominant in more states than Christians (Table 9). The latest census (Table 11) is not specific about religion, but the breakdown by states still give the Muslims a greater edge. Observable data confirm the official story that Muslims predominate in the north, are a minority in central and eastern Nigeria, and are almost equal to the Christian population in the southwest. I have worked within the limitations of these statistics.

Table 1	
Distribution of religions in Southern Nigeria, 1921	
Religion	Percent of population
Protestantism	7
Roman Catholicism	2
Muslims	5
Indigenous religions	86

Source: P. A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria* (London, 1926), 4:103, as cited in Peter B. Clarke and Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria: A Study of a Muslim Community in a Post-Independence State 1960-1983* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1984), p. 21.

Table 2

Proportion of Muslims in northern Nigerian provinces, 1931-1952

Province	Percent of population		Change (percent)
	1931	1951	
Adamawa	30.8	30.1	0.7
Bauchi	65.8	74.1	+8.3
Benue	6.1	10.6	+4.5
Borno	74.9	83.5	+8.6
Ilorin	43.5	62.6	+19.1
Kabba	7.5	22.4	+14.9
Kano	97.5	98.0	+0.5
Katsina		95.2	
Niger	44.6	44.1	0.5
Plateau	10.1	24.1	+14.0
Sokoto	92.1	94.0	+1.9
Zaria		64.4	

Source: L.J. Cantori, "The Political Implications of Islam in the Middle Belt of Nigeria," Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1962, p. 16, as found in Clarke & Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, p. 21.

Table 3
Nigerian population by region, 1952-53 and 1963 (thousands)

	1952-53	1963
Nigeria total	30,410	55,670
Male	14,869	28,112
Female	15,541	27,558
North total	16,835	29,809
Male	8,229	15,086
Female	8,606	14,723
East total	7,215	12,394
Male	3,488	6,121
Female	3,727	6,273
West total	6,085*	10,266
Male	3,001*	5,268
Female	3,084*	4,998
Middle West total		2,536
Female		1,258
Male		1,277
Lagos total	265*	665
Male	141*	375
Female	124*	288

* Including those of unstated age

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1963 and 1969, as cited in R. O.

Ekundare, *An Economic History of Nigeria* (London: Methuen, 1973), 403.

Table 4
Nigerian population by ethnic group (thousands)

	1921	1931	1952-53
Edo	473	508	468
Fulani	1,950	2,027	3,030
Hausa	3,337	3,630	5,544
Ibibio	960	750	757
Igbo	3,930	3,185	5,458
Kanuri	637	931	1,301
Nupe	347	327	358
Tiv	446	577	781
Yoruba	2,509	3,166	5,045
Others	4,038	4,822	7,619
Non-Nigerians	4	5	41

Source: Census of Nigeria, 1951 and 1952-53, as cited in Ekundare, *An Economic History*, 404.

Table 5
Nigerian population by region (thousands)

Region	Area (square miles)	1952-53	1963	1985*	1991
North	281,782	16,835	29,809	51,238	46,8
West	30,095	4,595	10,266	16,307	11,9
Middle West	15,281	1,492	2,536	4,359	4,7
East	29,484	7,215	12,394	21,304	18,9
Lagos	27	267	665	2,920	5,6
Abuja					3
Total	356,669	30,404	55,670	96,128	88,5

* Projected figures based on the 1963 census.

Source: Tom Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 21.

Table 6
Religious affiliation by region, 1952 and 1963

	Islam		Christianity		Other	
	1952	1963	1952	1963	1952	1963
North	73.0	71.7	2.7	9.7	24.3	18.6
West	32.8	43.4	36.9	48.7	30.3	7.7
East	0.6	0.3	46.2	77.2	50.2	22.1
Lagos	41.0	44.3	53.0	54.6	2.0*	1.1
Middle West		4.2		54.9		40.9
Total	44.47	49.0	22.0	34.0	33.6	17.0

Source: Nigerian Census, 1952; Nigerian Yearbook, 1969, as cited in J. N. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 44.

Table 7
Percentage of Muslims and Christians in the total Nigerian population, 1953 and 1963

	Muslims		Christians		Other	
	1953	1963	1953	1963	1953	1963
North	44.0	47.2	22.0	34.5	34.0	18.3
East	73.0	71.1	2.7	9.7	24.3	18.6
West	.3	.3	50.1	77.2	49.6	22.1
Middle West	32.4	43.4	36.2	48.7	31.4	7.7
Lagos	4.2	4.2	22.8	54.9	73.1	40.9
Total Nigeria	42.1	44.3	54.5	54.6	3.4	1.1

Source: Official statistics cited in Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 22.

Table 8
Population of Nigerian states, 1963 and 1973 (millions)*
Annual growth

State	1963	1973	(percent)
Lagos	1.44	2.47	+5.4
Western	9.49	8.92	0.6
Middle West	2.54	3.24	+2.4
East Central	1.54	2.23	+3.7
Southeastern	7.23	8.06	+1.1
Rivers	3.62	3.46	0.5
Benue-Plateau	4.01	5.17	+2.5
Kwara	2.40	5.64	+6.6
Northeastern	5.73	8.50	+3.9
North Central	4.10	6.79	+5.0
Kano	5.77	10.90	+6.4
Northeastern	7.79	15.38	+6.8
Total	55.6	79.76	+3.6

* Results of the 1973 were annulled by the Federal Military Government in July 1975, following protest by southern politicians.

Source: *West Africa*, 20 May 1974, 3.

Table 9

Percentage of Muslims by state, 1979

State	Muslims
Sokoto	97.6
Kano	97.4
Borno	93.1
Bauchi	80.6
Kwara	75.2
Oyo	62.4
Niger	59.7
Kaduna	56.4
Ogun	54.3
Lagos	44.3
Gongola	34.1
Plateau	25.7
Ondo	12.3
Benue	11.3
Bendel	7.4
Rivers	0.2
Cross River	0.1
Imo	0.1
Anambra	1.6

Source: Henry Bienen, *Political Conflict and Economic Change in Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1985)

Table 10
Muslims and Christians in the total Nigerian population, 1969-70.

	Christian	%	Muslim	%	Others	%
North	1,498,489	5.3	14,082,009	50.0	12,530,313	44.
West	2,900,216	29.0	2,229,102	22.5	4,784,340	48.
East	4,698,696	41.5	18,463	0.15	6,662,606	58.
Lagos	550,000	27.5	1,250,000	62.0	200,000	10.

Source: J. Couq, *Les Musulmans en Afrique* (Paris, 1975), 257, as cited in Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 22.

Table 11
Population of Nigerian states, 1991

State	Males	Females	Total
Abia	1,108,357	1,189,621	2,297,978
Adamawa	1,084,824	1,039,225	2,124,049
Akwa Ibom	1,162,430	1,197,306	2,359,736
Anambra	1,374,801	1,393,102	2,767,903
Bauchi	2,202,962	2,091,451	4,294,413
Benue	1,385,402	1,394,996	2,780,398
Borno	1,327,311	1,269,278	2,596,589
Cross-River	945,270	920,334	1,865,604
Delta	1,273,208	1,296,973	2,570,181
Edo	1,082,718	1,077,130	2,159,848
Enugu	1,482,245	1,679,050	3,161,295
Imo	1,178,031	1,037,468	2,485,499
Jigawa	1,419,726	1,410,203	2,829,929
Kaduna	2,059,382	1,908,870	3,969,252
Kano	2,858,724	2,773,316	5,632,040
Katsina	1,944,218	1,934,126	3,878,344
Kebbi	1,024,334	1,037,892	2,062,226
Kogi	1,055,964	1,043,082	2,099,046
Kwara	790,921	775,548	1,566,469
Lagos	2,999,528	2,686,253	5,685,781
Niger	1,290,720	1,191,647	2,482,367
Ogun	1,144,907	1,193,663	2,338,570
Ondo	1,958,928	1,925,557	3,884,485
Osun	1,079,424	1,123,592	2,203,016
Oyo	1,745,720	1,743,069	3,488,789
Plateau	1,645,730	1,637,974	3,283,704
Rivers	2,079,583	1,904,274	3,983,857
Sokoto	2,158,111	2,234,280	4,392,391
Taraba	754,754	725,836	1,480,590
Yobe	719,763	691,718	1,411,481

Abuja F.C.T.	206,535	172,136	378,671
Total Nigeria	44,544,531	43,969,970	88,514,501

Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria, Census Office.

Notes

Notes to Introduction

1. *Punch*, 24 April 1988, 8.
2. J. N. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
3. See, e.g., N. Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity* (London: British Academic Press, 1994).
4. *Report of Tribunal of Inquiry on Kano Disturbances* (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1981), 15.
5. E. B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1960); idem, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (New York: Orbis, 1975). See also J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Anchor, 1970).
6. J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891* (London: Longman, 1965); E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*. (London: Longman, 1966); idem, "Traditional Rulers and Missionaries in Pre-colonial Nigeria," *Tarikh* 3 (1969) pp. 23-37; idem, "The Missionary Factor in Brass, 1875-1900: a Study in Advance and Recession," *Bulletin of the Society For African Church History* 2, no. 3 (1967) 12-21; F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1971); and J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
7. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*; M. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967); A. Smith, "A Neglected Theme of West African History: The Islamic Revolution of the 19th Century,"

Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria 2 (1961): 169-185; R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906* (London: Longman, 1971); and T. G. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba, 1841-1908* (London: Longman, 1978).

8. See in particular his contribution to M. Eliade, ed., *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

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Notes to Chapter 2

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Notes to Chapter 3

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61. *Ibid.*, 103.
62. *Ibid.*, 105.
63. *Ibid.*, 112.
64. *Ibid.*, 125.
65. *Ibid.*, 132-3.
66. *Ibid.*, 133.
67. *Ibid.*, 134.
68. *Ibid.*, 95.
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74. *Daily Sketch*, 14 Dec. 1989, 8.

75. This information and others relating to the OIC are taken from OIC publications, especially its charter, which was reprinted in 1974.

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77. The prominent arms of the OIC include the International Islamic News Agency; the International Commission for Islamic Heritage;

the International Islamic Law Commission; the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade; the Islamic Commission for the International Crescent; the Islamic Centre for Vocational Training and Research; the Islamic Development Bank; the Islamic Solidarity Fund; the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture; the Islamic Civil Aviation Council; the Islamic Jurisprudence Academy; the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development; the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries; the Islamic Capitals Organization; the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Commodity Exchange; and the Islamic Education, Science and Cultural Organization.

78. D. Olojede, "Trip to Fez," *Newswatch*, 22 Feb. 1986, 7.

79. *Leadership In Nigeria (to Date): An Analysis* (Kaduna: Christian Association of Nigeria, Northern Zone, 1988), 27.

80. H. A. Adigwe *Nigeria Joins the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)* (Onitsha: Archdiocesan Secretariat, 1986), 10.

81. CAN, memorandum no. 41 (1986).

82. See, e.g., front page editorials in *Punch*, 25 Jan. 1986; and *The Sunday Times*, 26 Jan. 1986.

83. "The OIC," *The Mirror*, 28 and 29 Feb. 1986, p. 9.

84. A. F. Masha and Ram Oyekan, "O.I.C.: A Muslim Viewpoint," *The Guardian*, 11 Feb. 1986, 5; "Muslims Reply Christians and Make Demands," *African Concord*, 8 Feb. 1986, 3; and JN1, "The Position of Muslims with Regard to the O.I.C.," *New Nigerian*, 20 March 1986, 3.

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Muslim), Rev. C. B. Kabwink, Dr. Ismail Babatunde Jose (a Muslim journalist), Justice Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, Archbishop Okogie, Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Latamayin, Alh. Suleiman Onyeama, His Most Eminence Dr. G. I. M. Otubu, Justice Bashir Sambo (a Muslim), Bishop R. O. Umadi, and Mr. C. O. Williams.

89. Major General Babangida, address to the inaugural meeting of the Committee on Nigeria's Membership in the OIC, Abuja, 3 Feb. 1986. *The New Nigerian*, *The Guardian*, and *The Daily Times* carried in-depth coverage of the meeting.

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91. "Statement by the Catholic Bishops," 1.

92. *West Africa*, 31 March 1986, 664.

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4. Ibid., viii.

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13. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992.
14. JNI, "Beware of CAN," *The Reporter*, 15 June 1990, 14.
15. JNI, "CAN is a Political Party." *African Concord*, 11 June 1990, 32.
16. See, e.g., JNI, "Okogie Not a True Christian," *The Triumph*, 29 May 1990, 13.
17. JNI, "Attempt to Dominate the North," *The Reporter*, 15 June 1990, 14.
18. For details, see Falola and Kukah, *Religious Militancy and Self-Assertion*, chapter 10.
19. Constitution of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Article 7.
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81. Ibid., 19.
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11. D.P.O.M. Maikafa to the Commissioner of Police, 11 Sept. 1980, *Report of Tribunal of Inquiry on Kano Disturbances* (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1981), ¶ 77. The Tribunal's report is hereinafter cited as *RTKD*.
12. *RTKD*, ¶ 211.
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25. *RTKD*. ¶¶ 28, 29.
26. *Views of the Government of the Federation on the Report of the Kano Disturbances Tribunal of Inquiry* (Lagos: Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981), 7.
27. *RTKD*, ¶ 298.

28. *RTKD*, ¶ 51.
29. Cited in *RTKD*, ¶ 170.
30. Police records, *RTKD*.
31. Confidential memoranda and letters, *RTKD*.
32. *RTKD*, ¶ 154.
33. Cited in *RTKD*.
34. Letter of Governor Rimi to Marwa, *RTKD*.
35. *RTKD*, ¶ 171.
36. *RTKD*, ¶ 72.
37. *RTKD*, ¶ 76.
38. *RTKD*, ¶ 275.
39. Police testimony, *RTKD*, ¶¶ 44, 45.
40. *New Nigerian*, 24 Dec. 1980, 1.
41. *RTKD*, ¶ 49.
42. *New Nigerian*, 23 Dec. 1980.
43. *RTKD*, ¶ 49.
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47. See, for instance, the poetry of Ahmed Beita Yusu, in *Maitatsine: Peddler of Epidemics* (Kano: Systems Research and Consultancy, 1987).
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50. A. Gumi, "Marwa a Fanatic," *New Nigerian*, 7 Nov. 1982, 1.
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52. JNI, "Maitatsine Are False Muslims," *New Nigerian*, 21 Nov. 1982.
53. M.S.S., untitled article, *Radiance*, (Oct. 1983): 36.
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56. President Shagu Shagari, "New Year Message," *New Nigerian*, 2 Jan. 1981, 1.

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59. Most of the proceedings remain unpublished, perhaps because the government disagreed with their content, or perhaps because the government had only set up the tribunal to create the impression of concern.

60. *RTKD*, ¶ 1, 2.

61. *RTKD*, ¶ 188.

62. *RTKD*, ¶ 302.

63. *RTKD*, ¶ 223.

64. Police testimony, *RTKD*, ¶ 226.

65. *RTKD*, ¶ 227-47.

66. *RTKD*, ¶ 114.

67. *The Views and Comments of the Kano State Government on the Report of the Kano Disturbances Tribunal of Enquiry* (Kano: Kano

State Government, 1981).

68. Ibid., 10.

69. See, e.g., Alhassan Na Ayuba Zakaria, "Yan Tatsine: An Analysis of the Gardawa Uprising in Kano, Nigeria, 1980-5" (M.A. thesis, Bayero University, Kano, 1986).

70. *New Nigerian*, 28 Oct. 1982, 1.

71. *New Nigerian*, 1 Nov. 1982, 1.

72. *New Nigerian*, 3-5 March 1984, 1.

73. *Daily Star*, 29 May 1985; *The Guardian* 15 May 1985, 1.

74. *New Nigerian*, 30 Oct. 1982, 1.

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3. B. J. Takaya and S. G. Tyoden, eds., *The Kaduna Mafia: A Study of the Rise, Development and Consolidation of a Nigerian Power Elite* (Jos: Jos University Press, 1987).
4. See, e.g., Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 160-66.
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8. Ibid., 18.
9. *The Guardian*, 23 Feb. 1989, 3; A. Jiga, "Israel: Myth and Realities," *Nigerian Tribune*, 31 March 1989, 9.
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11. JNI to the Donli Panel, March 1987.
12. Ibid.
13. *Radiance* (student publication, Ahmadu Bello University, Jan.-March 1982): 1.
14. JNI to the Donli Panel, March 1987.

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16. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
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18. See, e.g., Alhaji Naibi, "Nigeria Should be a Member of OIC," *The Guardian*, 19 Jan. 1986, 12.
19. See, e.g., Dr. Wahab, "OIC is good for us," *Daily Sketch*, 29 Jan. 1986.
20. Nigeria Muslim Council, "Press Release," *National Concord*, 3 Feb. 1986, 3.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.
23. *Nigerian Tribune*, 17 Feb. 1989, 1.
24. NACOMYO press release, 28 May 1990.

25. *National Concord*, 17 Sept. 1985, 3; *The Guardian*, 4 Feb. 1987; *Daily Sketch*, 1 March 1986.

26. IRS press release, n.d. [1987].

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28. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992.

29. *Our Demands* (NACOMYO, self-published), 1; *The Punch*, 24 Dec. 1985, 16.

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31. See, e.g., V. C. Chukwulozie, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Nigeria* (Ibadan: self-published, 1986), 161.

32. *Contemporary Islam and Nigeria*, 17.

33. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992.

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35. See, e.g., William and Falola, *Religious Impact on the Nation State*, part 2.

36. *Citizen*, 12 Aug. 1991, 2-28. P.T.O.

37. Alkali, *Islam in Africa*.

38. *The Nigerian Herald*, 28 March 1978, 1.

39. *New Nigerian*, 3 Nov. 1982, 1.

40. *The Sketch*, 16 July 1985, 1.

41. See, e.g., *Sunday Tribune*, 13 July 1986.
42. *National Concord*, 25 July 1987, 15.
43. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Ibadan, 1992.
44. Anonymous, conversations with the author, Ibadan, 1992-93.
45. Editorial, *New Nigerian*, 10 Sept. 1986, 1.
46. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
47. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, 183.
48. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the school authorities who allowed some teachers and students to talk to me on seven occasions in 1993. I have labeled the documents I read in the school as *Kafanchan Files* for purposes of clarity and consistency in documentation. No such file with this label exists in the College. By unanimous request, names have not been mentioned; fear still pervaded the place when I visited.
49. I have seen similar banners in many Nigerian colleges, sometimes

causing offense to teachers and members of the public who do not identify with such advertisements or their wordings.

50. Abubakar Bako, "Memorandum submitted to the Administrative Panel (The Donli Committee) on Religious Crisis in Kaduna State," in CAN, *Kaduna Religious Riot '87: A Catalogue of Events* (Kaduna: CAN Publicity Committee), 8-17.

51. Aisha, "Memorandum to the Donli Committee," in CAN, *Kaduna Religious Riots*, 18.

52. See O. Adinoy-Ojo, "On the Bloody Trail of Religious Violence," *The Guardian*, 18 March 1987, 7.

53. *Daily Times*, 11 March 1987, 1.

54. "Governor Umar's Address to the Public, March 7, 1987," *New Nigerian*, 11 March 1987, 3.

55. Ibid.

56. "Governor Appeals for Calm," *National Concord*, 11 March 1987, 19.

57. Christian Association of Nigeria, *And It Came To Pass: The Sordid Story of the Burning of 113 Churches by Muslim Rioters Within 20 Hours in March 1987* (Zaria: CAN, Zaria Branch, 1987).

58. *The Guardian*, 15 March 1987, 9.

59. *Sunday Voice*, 13 March 1987, 16.

60. *The Guardian*, 21 March 1987, 1.

61. Anonymous, conversations with the author, 1992-93.

62. *The Guardian*, 15 March 1987, 9.

63. Ibid.

64. *Sunday Voice*, 13 March 1987, 16.

65. "Go into Hiding, Police Warns Christians" *The Guardian*, 14 March 1987, 1.

66. *Ibid.*, 2.

67. Anonymous, conversations with the author, 1992-93.

68. C. Williams, "The Worst Crisis," *The Guardian*, 21 March 1987, 2.

69. Christian Association of Nigeria, Kano State Branch, press release, 15 Nov. 1987. They listed the following: an attempt on Christ Church, Fagge; burning down the Church of the Lord at 35A Burma Road; damage to the Pentecostal Church of Christ at 8A Festing Road, damage to Eternal Sacred Order of C. & S. at 24 Sani Giwa Road; damage to Cherubim and Serafim Church at 31 Sanusi Road and another one at 80 Free Town Road, damage to Igbala Apostolic Church at 74 Weather Road, damage to Christ Church of Light at 57A Ballt Hughes Road; damage to Celestial Church of

Christ near N.T. Manufacturers Kano; burning down the Christian Literature and Records Store at 71 Freetown Road; and damage to other Christian property in the community.

70. CAN, Northern States, open letter to President Babangida, 13 March 1987.

71. *The Guardian*, 14 March 1987, 2.

72. Catholic Bishops, "Press Statement," *The Guardian*, 18 March 1987, 19.

73. Anglican Church, "Press Statement," *The Guardian*, 14 March 1987, 2.

74. See, e.g., CAN's advertisement in the *Daily Times*, 18 Nov. 1987, 17.

75. "Interview with Gumi," *This Week*, 6 April 1987, 18.

76. "Babangida This is a Civilian Coup," *The Guardian*, 17 March 1987, 1. Some key officers of the administration also accused Christian military officers from southern Zaria of creating the trouble to remove the governor and the emir. *West Africa*, 23 March 1987, 550.

77. Religious Societies, etc. (Temporary Prohibition) Decree, 1987.

78. "Governor Umar's Address," 3.

79. *The Triumph*, 23 April 1987, 1.

80. Editorial, "Healing the Wounds of Bauchi," *Daily Times*, 24 March 1987, 1.

81. *Daily Times*, 24 March 1987, 1.

82. Ibid.

83. Editorial, "Gumi's Threat to Peace," *The Guardian*, 13 Oct. 1987.
84. ASUU, University of Ilorin branch, press release, 20 March 1987.
85. ASUU, "Press Release," *Sunday Punch*, 22 March 1987, 3.
86. *The Guardian*, 1 Aug. 1987, 1.
87. *New Nigerian*, 31 July 1987, 1.
88. *The Guardian*, 18 June 1987, 1.
89. *Daily Sketch*, 7 Nov. 1987, 1.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. Translated from a portion of fieldnotes. Cecilia Oyedele, conversation with the author, Ibadan, 1993.
2. See, e.g., S. Olagunji, "One Bloody Clash, Too Many," *Sunday Times*, 15 March 1987, 9.

3. In addition to my field staff, I must acknowledge the additional support of Murih Muibi, a Katsina-based Islamic teacher and public letter writer, for locating informants and for introducing me to many public officials and the police in Katsina state.
4. "A Mullah's Mission," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 32.
5. Anonymous, conversations with the author, Katsina, 1993.
6. See the interview with Yahaya in the *African Concord*, 22 April, 32.
7. Al-Zakzaky, *Fadakarwa Ga Musulmin Nigeria* (Calling on All Nigerian Muslims) (Zaria: self-published, 1980).
8. These cassettes include "The Time Shall Come," "Ungodly People," and "Praying for Forgiveness." Studio and production dates are not indicated, but none was before 1985, given the references to some political events and names of people. (My translations).
9. The cassette referred to is "Praying for Forgiveness."
10. El-Zakzaky, "I Do Not Respect the Constitution," *Weekend Concord*, 20 April 1991.
11. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Katsina.
12. "A Mullah's Mission," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 31.
13. I was allowed to read but not photocopy police and security reports on Yahaya in Katsina.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Anonymous senior public officials, conversations with the author,

Katsina, 1993.

18. Ibid.

19. Y. Mohammed, *et. al.*, "Now the War: Shiite Muslim Leader defies Order and Riot Engulfs Katsina," Cited in *Newswatch*, 29 April 1991. See also "A Mullah's mission," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 32.

20. "A Mullah's Mission, *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 32.

21. Interview with Yahaya by O. Ojudu, "I Am Not Afraid of Death," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 37. This view was re-affirmed to me in 1993 by the members of the group.

22. Ibid.

23. "A Mullah's Mission," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 34.

24. Anonymous members of Yahaya's group, conversation with the author, 1993.

25. Interview with Yahaya by O. Ojudu, "I Am Not Afraid of Death," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 36.
26. Anonymous members of Yahaya's group, conversation with the author, 1993.
27. Interview with Yahaya, "a mULLAH'S mISSION," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 34.
28. El-Zakzaky, "I Do Not Respect the Constitution," *Weekend Concord*, 20 April 1991.
29. "A Mullah's Mission" *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 34.
30. Anonymous public officials, conversation with the author, Katsina, 1993.
31. Isaac Kogbe, conversation with the author, Katsina, 1993.
32. Editorial, *New Nigerian*, 9 April 1991, 1.
33. *National Concord*, 12 April 1991, 1.
34. Interview with Madaki, "A Mullah's Mission," *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 33.
35. "Apology" *Daily Times*, 4 April 1991, 7.
36. Anonymous members of the group, conversation with the author; Yakubu Yahaya's file.
37. Anonymous members of the group, conversation with the author. They still hold to this belief.
38. Yakubu Yahaya's File.
39. "A Mullah's Mission" *African Concord*, 22 April 1991, 35.
40. Ibid.

41. Anonymous, conversations with the author, Katsina, 1993; "A Mullah's Mission," *Newswatch*, 29 April 1991, 16.
42. Anonymous members of the group, conversation with the author, 1993.
43. *Newswatch*, 17 May 1991, 17.
44. *New Nigerian*, 21 Sept. 1996, 1.
45. Ibid.
46. *Daily Times*, 23 Sept. 1996.
47. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 13.
48. Tafawa Balewa, conversation with the author, 1993.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid. (Four NRC politicians joined this particular interview.)
52. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 15.

53. Anonymous, conversations with the author, Bauchi, 1993.
54. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 14.
55. Anonymous, conversations with the author, Bauchi, 1993.
56. Jacob Gbor, conversation with the author, Bauchi, 1993.
57. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 12.
58. See, e.g., "The Bauchi Massacre," *African Concord*, 6 May 1991, 26-33.
59. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 13;
Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
60. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 14.
61. "The Bauchi Massacre," *African Concord*, 6 May 1991, 30.
62. "Death and Destruction," *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 15.
63. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
64. "The Bauchi Massacre," *African Concord*, 6 May 1991, 32.
65. Ibid.
66. Justice B. O. Babalakin was a Supreme court judge. There were four other members drawn from different parts of the country.
67. "The Bauchi Massacre," *New Nigerian*, 22 May 1991.
68. *The Guardian*, 15 April 1991.
69. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Bauchi, 1993.
70. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
71. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kano, 1993.

72. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kano, 1993.
73. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kano, 1993.
74. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
75. *New Nigeria*, 15 Oct. 1991; *Daily Times*, 25 Oct. 1991, 18.
76. *The Guardian*, 16 Oct. 1991, 1.
77. *The Guardian*, 16 Oct. 1991, 2.
78. El-hajj Mohammad Ahmed, conversation with the author, Kano, 1992.
79. Written in Hausa, copies were sent to the Emir of Zaria, the state police commissioner, the director of the State Security Services, JNI, Fitiyanu Islam, the Ansar Ud Deen Society, Islam Forum, Kano, Council of 'Ulama, the Zangon-Kataf local government chairman, and the district head of Zangon-Kataf.
80. Anonymous Kataf indegenes, conversation with the author, 1993. I must acknowledge the support of Dr. Hassan Kukah, a Kataf and the general secretary of the Catholic Secretariat in Lagos, whose name I used to penetrate this community.

81. Ibid.
82. "Mayhem in Zangon-Kataf," *African Concord*, 25 May 1991, 27.
83. Anonymous, conversation with the author. My assistant and I were able to reach the Hausa community and interview over a hundred of them through the assistance of a school teacher, Yusuf Haruna of Zaria. Yusuf joked that he was risking his life for the pagan Falola for the cause of scholarship. Without Yusuf, it would almost have been impossible for me to penetrate this group; my own identity generates distrust among them. He also assisted with translation of field materials.
84. Interview with Madaki, *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 29.
85. Ibid.
86. Kataf Youth Association to the Governor of Kaduna State, March 1992.
87. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Hausa community, 1993.
88. Mallam Ibrahim, conversation with the author, Kaduna, 1993.
89. "Heart of the Matter," *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 30. (Interview with Col-Yohanna Madaki (rtd.) by Timothy Bonnet.)
90. Anonymous Kataf informants, conversation with the author, 1993.
91. "Concerned Kataf Elites" to the Governor of Kaduna state, March 1992.
92. Anonymous Kataf informants, conversation with the author, 1993.
93. "Violence Unlimited," *Newswatch*, 1 June 1992, 12; Anonymous, conversation with the author.

94. "Massacre in Kaduna," *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 24.
95. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kaduna, 1987.
96. *African Concord*, 1 June 1992.
97. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kaduna, 1993;
"Massacre in Kaduna," *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 25.
98. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kaduna, 1993.
99. *New Nigerian*, 17 May 1992, 1.
100. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kaduna, 1993.
101. "Massacre in Kaduna," *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 25.
102. "Violence Unlimited," *Newswatch*, 1 June 1992, 10.
103. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Kaduna, 1993.
104. Ibid.
105. "Violence Unlimited," *Newswatch*, 1 June 1992, 15.
106. Anonymous, conversation with the author, Zaria, 1993;
"Massacre in Kaduna," *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 26.
107. "Violence Unlimited," *Newswatch*, 1 June 1992, 15.
108. "Violence Unlimited," *Newswatch*, 1 June 1992, 10.

109. "CAN Criticizes Government," *National Concord*, 11 June 1992, 13.
110. Christian Association of Nigeria, press release, 22 May 1992.
111. "Heart of the Matter," 29-31 for the *African Concord*; "Mayhem in Kaduna," *Citizen*, 25 May 1992, 10-19; "The Immediate Aftermath of Zangon-Kataf," *Citizen*, 1 June 1992, 6; M. Haruna, "Zango and Our Conscience," *Citizen*, 1 June 1992, 9; "As the Dust Settles," *Citizen*, 1 June 1992, 9; "Most Callous and Outrageous Scene," (interview with Malam Muhammed Mahdi Shehu, the medical director of Ni'ima Hospital, Kaduna) *Citizen*, 1 June 1992, 14; "A savage carnage," *The African Guardian*, 1 June 1992, 20-23; "Three Views on the Mayhem," *African Guardian*, 1 June 1992, 24-28.
112. "Heart of the Matter," *African Concord*, 1 June 1992, 31.
113. *The Guardian*, 14 Dec. 1995, 1.
114. *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1989, 39.
115. *Newswatch*, 6 May 1991, 17.
116. *The Punch*, 28 Jan. 1991.
117. See chapter 4, above.
118. "Death and Destruction." For a public debate on religion and politics during the period, see the essays on "Christian-Muslim Relationship" in *The Voice*, 31 (1992-93): 1-53.
119. CAN, *Leadership in Nigeria*, 73.
120. See, e.g., O. Okeke, *Hausa Fulani Hegemony: The Dominance of the Muslim North in Contemporary Nigeria* (Enugu: Acena, 1992).
121. "Religion and the Third Republic." On some of these maneuvers among party men, see, e.g., See also CAN, "Can Press Statement,"

The Nigerian Christian, 26, 3 (1993): 10-13. *African Guardian*, 2 July 1990, 24-30.

122. See, e.g., *Nigerian Tribune*, 11 June 1990, 1.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. The impression should not be had that Christians do not fight. Divisions are in fact much more common in Nigerian Christianity, with new churches emerging every year as a result of doctrinal differences, personal ambitions, and leadership struggles. Schism has tended to minimize the use of violence to settle differences. In addition, I have indicated in some of the preceding chapters that Christianity is undergoing a resur-

gence and that its militancy has contributed to ongoing tension and inter-religious conflicts. The literature on schism is rather extensive. See, e.g., D. B. Barret, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi: Oxford, 1968); and O. U. Kalu, *Divided People of God: Church Union Movement in Nigeria, 1875-1966* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1978).

2. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.
3. Both *tariqa* have a variety of local names in different areas. For instance in the Plateau State, the Tijaniyya are known as the *wazifa*.
4. See, e.g., L. Brenner, *West African Sufi: The Religious Heritage and Spiritual Search of Cerno Bokar Saalif Taal* (London: C. Hurst, 1984).
5. On its early history, based on the teachings of Sheikh Abd al-Qadr al-Tijani (d. 1166 A.D.), see among others, B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa*. (California: C. U.P., 1976); A. F. Ahmad, "The Spread of the Qadiriyyah in Bornu and the Hausaland Before the Sokoto Jihad," *Al-Fikr* 11 (1990): 148-157; and Rev. J. Hinds, "Sufism in Northern Nigeria Islam," *Nigeria Dialogue: A Journal of Inter-Faith Studies on the Relations between Christianity and Non-Christian Religions* 4, no. 4 (1982): 17-20.
6. See, e.g., O. Kane, "La confrerie Tijaniyya Ibrahima de Kano et ses liens la Zawiya mère de Kaolack," *Islam et sociétés au sud Sahara* 3 (1989): 27-40.
7. A. R. Mohammed, "History of the Spread of Islam in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area: Igalaland, Ebiraland and Lokoja, c. 1900-1960" (Ph.D. diss., Bayero University, Kano, 1986).
8. See for instance A. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa. A*

Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

9. For the doctrines and practices of the Tijaniyya, see J. M. Abun Nasr, *The Tijaniyya* (London, 1962); and O. Jah, "Sufism and the Nineteenth-Century Jihad Movements in the Western Sudan: a Case Study of al-Hajj 'Umar al-Futi's Philosophy of Jihad and its Sufi Bases" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1973).

10. Given the orientation of this book, full justice cannot be done to all these issues. There is a need for a full-length study on Islamic identity and Islamic organizations in modern Nigeria.

11. See, e.g., Ali Rahnema and Farhad Nomani, *The Secular Mirage: Religion, Politics and Economic Policy in Iran* (London: Zed, 1990), chapter 8.

12. See, e.g., J. O. Hunwick, "Notes on a Late Fifteenth-Century Document Concerning 'al-Takrur,'" in C. H. Allen and R. W. Johnson, eds., *African Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
13. See, e.g., S. H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*. (London and New York: K. Paul International 1987), 302-3.
14. M. A. Al-Hajj, "The Thirteenth Century in Muslim Eschatology: Mahdist Expectations in the Sokoto Caliphate," *Research Bulletin* (Centre of Arabic Documentation, Ibadan) 3 (1967).
15. P. B. Clarke (1980) "Islamic Millenarianism in West Africa: A Revolutionary Ideology?," *Religious Studies*, 16 (1980): 317-39.
16. Northern Nigeria Colonial Reports 1905-6, 367.
17. See for instance C.S.O. 26/09321, Islamic Political Movements; and C.S.O. 26/03061, Intelligence From Sudan and Egypt Affecting Nigeria (1) Anti British (2) Mai Wurno, *etc.*
18. The founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, did believe that he was the Mahdi.
19. C.S.O. 26/0101, Ahmadiyya Movement Monlvie Abdur-Rahim Nayya P.P.
20. This is not to suggest that there are neither schismatic tendencies nor actual exchanges of combative postures in Yoruba Islam. It is becoming certain that Yoruba Islam is no more homogeneous than Islam of the north, although patterns of intra-religious disaffection may be different between the two regions. While this chapter has continued its analysis mainly to the north, it is not being suggested that Muslims elsewhere do not disagree.
21. Mentioned briefly in *RTKD* ¶ 281; Anonymous, conversation with

the author, 1993.

22. See, e.g., Stefan Reichmuth, "Islamic Learning and Its Interaction with 'Western' Education in Ilorin, Nigeria," in Brenner, *Muslim Identity*, 179-97; and David C. Sperling, "Rural Madrasa of the Southern Kenya Coast, 1971-92," in Brenner, *Muslim Identity*, 198-209.

23. On the nature of their rivalry before 1970, see, e.g., Y. A. Qadri, "Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah Relations in Nigeria in the 20th Century," *Orita* 16, no. 1 (1984), 15-30.

24. *RTKD*, ¶ 281.

25. Sani Yahaya, "The Tijaniyya Are Locusts" (translation from a pamphlet self-published by the preacher in 1978).

26. *RTKD*, ¶ 251.

27. See for instance Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, 548-51; A. R. Mohammed,

"The Influence of the Niass Tijaniyya in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area of Nigeria," in L. Brenner, *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 132.

28. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.

29. Ibid.

30. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, 124.

31. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.

32. Ibid.

33. A number of Christian groups, too, especially in places like Kaduna and Zaria, pray five times a day, a practice borrowed from Islam.

34. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. See, e.g., Gumi, *Where I Stand*.

43. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.

44. See, e.g., M. S. Umar, "Changing Islamic Identity in Nigeria from

the 1960s to the 1980s: From Sufism to Anti-Sufism," in Brenner *Muslim Identity*, 154-78.

45. See chapter 4, above.

46. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.

47. I met not a few in the Sheraton (Lagos), the Hilton (Abuja), and the Durbar in Kaduna.

48. Anonymous, conversation with the author.

49. Anonymous, conversation with the author.

50. For coverage of the *Izala* and a few of the similarities with the Nigerian case, see the brilliant but apparently tentative study by E. Gregoire, "Islam and the Identity of Merchants in Maradi (Niger)," in Brenner, ed., *Muslim Identity*, 106-15.

51. Gumi, *Where I Stand*, p. 66.

52. Ibid., 135.

53. *Al-Aqidatul Al-Sahihah Bi Muwafaqat Al-Shari'ah* (The Right Belief is Based on the Shari'a) (self-published, 1972).

54. Gumi, *Where I Stand*, 139.
55. See, e.g., "Gumi is Not a True Muslim," *New Nigerian*, 7 Nov. 1982, 7; and Umar, "Changing Islamic Identity," 165-66.
56. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.
57. Ibid.
58. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993. To a Yoruba, the *Babalawo* is a diviner, a disciple of Orunmila.
59. See, e.g., Idris, *A gane Bambancin Gaskiya da Karya* (Jos: self-published, 1978).
60. *RTKD*, ¶ 281.
61. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.
66. *RTKD*, ¶ 281; *The Standard*, 22, 1; and 23 April 1978, 1.
67. Ibid.
68. See, e.g., *New Nigerian*, 19 and 21 Jan. 1988; and *Report of the Committee on Datika and Anti-Datika Movements in Plateau States: Main Report* (Jos: Government Printer, 1980), vol. 1.
69. See the various memoranda of Islamic leaders in *RTKD*; conversations with the author, 1992-93.

1. Qur'an, 112:1-4; Alhaji Ali Ali, Qur'anic teacher, conversation with the author, Maiduguri, 1992.
2. Ibid.; Sanni Olu, principal of a Qur'anic school, conversation with the author, Ibadan, 1992.
3. Ibid.
4. Anonymous, *The God That Never Was*. (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d. [1990]).
5. Ibid., 2.
6. The following passages are cited by the writer: Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:13, Hebrews 4:15, James 1:13, James 1:14; Matthew 3:11; and Mark 4:10-12.
7. Reference is made to John 2: 13-15; Matthew 10:34; and Luke 22:36.

8. Reference is made to John 7:1, 11:53-54, 10:39, and 8:59.
9. *The God That Never Was*, 15.
10. Qur'an 19:35, 36.
11. See Ahmed Deedat, *Christ in Islam* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.).
12. One Islamic preacher cited Deuteronomy 18:20 to support this assertion.
13. Qur'an 4:157.
14. Deedat, *Was Christ Crucified?* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.).
15. Deedat was originally an Indian before he moved to South Africa, where he became a prominent writer, preacher, broadcaster, and director of the influential Islamic Center in Durban. His writings are popular in Nigeria and have been translated into a number of local languages.
16. Ibid., 2.
17. His evidence is drawn from Luke 22:35-37, which reads in part: "Then said he unto them, but now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his script. And he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."
18. Deedat, *Was Christ Crucified?*, 7.
19. Deedat, *Crucifixion of Crucifixion?* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.)
20. Lagos, Kaduna, and Kano: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1985.
21. *The Myth of the Cross* (self-published, n.d.)
22. W. J. Sheard, *Who Founded Christianity: Jesus or Jewry?* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1985).

23. F. I. Anweri, *A Talk between a Muslim and a Christian* (Lagos: Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, n.d.), 1.
24. H. M. Bagil, *My Christian Guest* (Lagos: Daawat-ul-Islamiyyat, n.d.); Dr. Manh Hammad Al-Johani, *The Truth About Jesus* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.); and Ali Muhsin, *Let The Bible Speak*. (Lagos, Islamic Publications, n.d.)
25. For details, see Islamic Publications Bureau, *The Gospel of Barnabas* (Lagos: Academy Press, 1983).
26. Ali Muhsi, *Let the Bible Speak*, preface. The author was a national of Zanzibar, but his various pamphlets circulate widely in Nigeria, where they are reprinted by Islamic organizations.
27. Sultan Muhammed Paul, *Why I Became a Muslim* (self-published, 1993), 9-10.
28. Sheard, *The Myth of the Crucified Saviour*, 8.

29. Deedat, *Nje Oro Olorun ni Bibeli* (Is the Bible the Word of God?) (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.).
30. *Lagos Weekend*, 25 June 1982, 7.
31. Deedat, *Is the Bible God's Word?* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1989).
32. M. O. A. Abdul, *The Selected Traditions of Al-Nawawi* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1982), preface.
33. Lagos: Daawat-Ul-Islamiyyat Book Centre, n.d.; see also Deedat, *What is His Name?* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.).
34. Alhaji Muhammed Hassim Badamasy, *Shariat in the Bible* (Iwo: Youmosn Islamic Educational Services, n.d.).
35. Ahmed Deedat, *What the Bible Says about Muhammed (Peace Upon Him)* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d.). The common citation is Deut. 18:18, which is said not to refer to Jesus but to the Prophet Muhammad. See also Muhammad Ahmed, *Misinterpretations of the Qur'an* (Minna: Islamic Education Trust, 1992); and K. Mahmud "The Concept of al-Mahdi according to the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam," *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 11, no. 2 (1968): 105-6.
36. M. Alli Kettani, *The Muslim Minorities* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1979), 22.
37. See, e.g., J. Gilcrease, *Why I Accept Islam* (Lagos: Daawat-Ul-Islamiyyat Book Centre, n.d.).
38. I.K. Sanni and D. A. Amoo (Ibadan: Tawhid Publications, 1407 A.H.)
39. *Why You Should Never Be a Christian*, viii.
40. *Ibid.*, x-ix.

41. Ibid., 48.

42. Ibid., 34.

43. This is a widely-used medication for malaria.

44. See, e.g., Sultan Muhammed Paul, *Why I Became a Christian*.

45. P. Jinadu, *I Have Seen the Lord* (York & Ibadan: Christian Growth Books, 1985).

46. Ibid., 5.

47. Ibid., 5.

48. Ibid., 2.

49. Ibid., 3.

50. Ibid., 7.

51. Ibid., 28.

52. Ibid., 42.

53. Ibid., 43-55.

54. See, e.g., Guy V. Casey, *A Reply to a Muslim* (Arlington, Tex.: Mission Printing, n.d.) Although this pamphlet is written by an American, it is widely distributed in Nigeria and Ghana, and translated into one Nigerian language.

55. J. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, 319-20.

56. G. J. O. Moshay, *Who Is This Allah?* (Ibadan: Fireliners, 1990).

57. Ibid., v.

58. Ibid., 16.

59. See, e.g., Qur'an 5:36, 38; 47; 2:190-191; Hadith, vol. 2, pp. 252-86.

60. Ibid., 19.

61. Ibid., 24.

62. Casey, *A Reply to a Muslim*.

63. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1993.

64. See, e.g., V. Bivando and C. Moucarray, *Reaching Muslims for Christ* (Ibadan: Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 1986).

65. *Misconceptions About Islam* (Minna: Islamic Education Trust, 1992); and S. Abul A'la Maududi, *Jihad in Islam* (Lagos: Ibrahs, n.d.).

66. JNI, Memorandum to the Donli Commission, sect. 4(c).

67. See, for instance, the writings of John Gilchrist, whose work is directed at attacking Ahmed Deedat: *The Textual History of the Qur'an and the Bible: A Reply to Is the Bible God's Word by Ahmed*

Deedat (Published in Austria and circulated in Nigeria by The Christian Bookstore, Lagos.) Also see his *Christ in Islam and Christianity: A Response to Christ in Islam* by Ahmed Deedat.

68. For the political ends that comedy and humor can serve, see J. H. Goldstein and P. E. McGhee, *The Psychology of Humour* (New York: Academic Press, 1972); and M. R. Koller, *Humour and Society: Explorations in the Sociology of Humour* (Houston: Cap and Gown Press, 1988).

69. See *New Nigerian*, 2 Oct. 1992; *How Rushdie Fooled the West* (Lagos: Ibrash, n.d. [1993]).

70. See, e.g., Jack Levin and W. C. Levin, *The Functions of Discrimination and Prejudice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982); Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986); and H. Schuman, C. Steeh, and L. Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

Notes to Chapter 10

1. See, e.g., *The God That Never Was*.
2. Tracts are so numerous and ephemeral that it is impossible to compile any statistics on their publication or readership.
3. For instance, The Sword of the Spirit Ministries, based at Ibadan, has printed over a dozen pamphlets in the last one year, mainly written by their leader, Francis Wale Oke, in addition to a bi-monthly magazine. See, e.g., Wale Oke, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare* (Ibadan, self-published, 1990).
4. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.
5. President Babangida, "Address to the Nation," *New Nigerian*, 19 Oct 1988, 3.
6. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93
7. Momoh et al., eds., *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*.
8. Ibid., opening page of each volume.
9. E. Bolaji Idowu, "Religions on Peace," *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (1971), 83-92.
10. Pope John Paul II, "Address to Young Muslims," in *The Pope Teaches*, 1985-9 (London: CTS, 1985), 270.
11. Momoh et. al., *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*. See also M. A. Bidmos, *Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1993); and C. S. Abashiya and A. F. Ulea, *Christianity and Islam: A Plea For Understanding and Tolerance* (Jos: self-published, 1991).
12. See the essays on "traditional religion" in Momoh et al., *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*.

13. Moshay, 17.
14. Ibid., 24.
15. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992.
16. See, e.g., S. O. Abogunrin, *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Daystar, 1986); S. S. Nwachukwu Iwe, *Socioethical Issues in Nigeria* (Obosi: Pacific Publishers, 1991); John Uyanwune, *Morality in Education* (Jos: self-published, 1989); Joseph I. Omoregbe, *Ethics for Every Nigerian: Operation Save Nigeria From Corruption* (Lagos: National Association For Moral Regeneration, 1991); Y. A. Quadri, "Islam and Nation Building: The Nigerian Experience," *Al-fikr* 11 (June 1990), 86-95; and Fr. V. C. Chukwuloszie, "Seminar on the Spiritual Aspects of Nation-Building," *Nigerian Dialogue* 3, no. 3 (1979), 5-6.

17. Address delivered at the Inaugural Meeting of the Committee on Nigeria's Membership of the OIC, 3 Feb. 1986.
18. See, e.g., Joseph Nmaudi, "Religion and Nigeria's Future."
19. Editorial, *Nigerian Tribune*, 14 March 1987.
20. Aniagolu, *the Making of the 1989 Constitution*, p. 254.
21. On the Sudanese crisis, see M. W. Daly, "The Sudanese Civil War: An Irrepressible Conflict," unpublished manuscript, 1991.
22. Enwerem, *A Dangerous Awakening*, conclusion.
23. See, e.g., David Westerlund, "Secularism, Civil Religion or Islam: Islamic Revivalism and the National Question in Nigeria," in Austin Metumara Ahanotu, ed., *Religion, State and Society in Contemporary Africa: Nigeria, Sudan, South Africa, Zaire and Mozambique* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 71-102.

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1. See, e.g., B. Blauner, *Black Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); F. I. Clark, "Hate Violence in the United States," *F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin* 60 (1991); and L. Siegleman and S. Welch, *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
2. See, e.g., *West Africa*, 8 Nov. 1982, 2873.
3. See, e.g., *Good News*, April-May 1988.
4. Moshay, 38.
5. A number of studies have made a connection between prejudice, domination by force, and self-esteem. See, e.g., T. W. Adorno, E. Frankel-Brunswick, D. J. Levinson, and N. H. Sanford, *The*

Authoritarian Personality (New York: Random House, 1990).

6. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.

7. Ibid.

8. CAN, "CAN to President Babangida," 25 March 1987.

9. *Radiance*, Oct. 1983, 43-44 (italics original).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. See Turaki, "The Institutionalization."

13. *Rejoinder to Leadership in Nigeria*, 4.

14. TEKAN, *Towards the Right Path for Nigeria* (Jos: TEKAN, 1987), 68.

15. Anonymous, conversation with the author, 1992-93.

16. D. Lamb, *The Arabs* (New York: Random House, 1987), 287.
17. For deep accounts of the personal experiences of many Christian victims of violence, see CAN, *And It Came To Pass*, 128ff.
18. See Stuart Mews, *Religion in Politics: A Guide* (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1989).
19. For details, see Ahmed, *State, Nation*, chapter 10.
20. Ahmed, *State, Nation*, 278.
21. M. J. Akbar, *Kashmir: Behind the Vale* (New Delhi: Viking, 1991).
22. For authoritative studies on violence in the United States, see H. G. Graham and T. R. Gurr *Violence in America* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969); and Graham and Gurr, eds. *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979).
23. See my "Leadership in Nigeria" in Falola, ed., *Modern Nigeria* (Lagos: Modelor, 1989), 159-173.
24. Akin Alao, "National Integration in Nigeria," in Falola, *Modern Nigeria*, 120-142.
25. See the long-standing work on the relationship between cooperation and integration in M. Sherif, et al., *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).
26. Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, conversation with the author, 1992.
27. This term is borrowed from C. Perelman, "The Philosophy of Pluralism," *Philosophic Exchange* 12, no. 4 (1978): 49-56.
28. See, e.g., R. Pannikker, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of BabelA Meditation on Non-Violence," *Cross Currents* 29, no. 2

(1979): 197-230.

29. For a full elaboration of pluralism as it applies to Nigeria, see the writings of Segun Ilesanmi, especially his book, *Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State* (Ohio: Center for International Studies Monograph Series, 1997).

Notes to Appendix

1. CAN, Leadership in Nigeria, 24-25

2. Muslim Students Society, Ibadan Branch, "Yield Not to Minorities," press release, 13 Oct.

3. See, for instance, the *Profiles of Islamic Countries*.

4. See Peter B. Clarke and Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria: A Study of a Muslim Community in a Post-Independence State 1960-1983* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1984), 19.

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